Civic Center Fan Keeps Things in Order

By Shirley Trimble

An eye-opening tour of the Marin County Civic Center many years ago was the beginning of Montserrat Sthymmel’s love affair with the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed building.

For 10 years, Monserrat was an enthusiastic Civic Center Volunteers tour docent and relished her opportunity to meet people from all over the world and tell them about this national monument. Her lingual fluency in Catalan, English, French, and Spanish made her tours especially valuable.

After the death of her husband, Gary, and caring for her then-infant granddaughter, Violette (now a college student), Montserrat returned to the beloved building as a library aide at the Marin County Free Library’s Civic Center branch, located on the fourth floor under the dome.

Volunteering with Library Desk Supervisor Teresa Snyder, her first projects were re-labeling library materials to indicate “Marin County Library.” Section by section, she used her eagle eye and scoured shelves for misfiled books, which were then returned to their correct places.

Recently, Montserrat has been shelf-reading to make sure library items are in proper order.

“Montserrat is a person of great energy and flair and is a treasured volunteer,” said Teresa.

“She makes the most of her weekly one-hour gig and the library benefits all the time from her work. She is such a pro at what she does. We applaud her excellent work and dedication.” Teresa added: “She also makes the very best Key lime pie!”

Montserrat, who studied the history of Frank Lloyd Wright and met his protégé, architect Aaron Green, says she loves the Civic Center at all hours, especially at sunset when the sun’s rays turn the atrium walls to gold. “One of the best rooms for me is the library,” said Montserrat. “The atmosphere is delightful, and everyone treats me with respect.”

(Continued on page 2)
Civic Center Fan Keeps Order
(continued from page 1)

respect -- perhaps because at 81 I am the oldest volunteer there!"

Originally from Catalonia, Spain, Montserrat went to school in Paris for two years to improve her French. Later, back in Spain, she taught French to adult students. In 1963 she came to San Francisco to learn English and met her husband, Gary, at an art gallery in the city.

The couple had two daughters, Nuria and Adriana. Today, Nuria and her husband own the charming Larkspur boutique Coquelicot. Montserrat works at the shop, filling in whenever needed. She stays busy with family activities and enjoys touring museums, attending the opera and symphony, hiking, and traveling. Her reading list favors biographies, art books, and historical fiction.

As a Marin County Free Library volunteer, Montserrat is part of a large group active at nine of the library system's 10 branches. Last year, 115 library volunteers and interns served 6,240 hours. Included in those numbers are Library Beyond Walls liaisons, who deliver materials to homebound patrons, and youth volunteers fulfilling their high school community service requirements.

Interested in volunteering with the library? Next time you visit your local branch, speak with a staff member -- or contact the CCV office at 415-473-7407. For Library Beyond Walls only, contact Community Library Specialist Ann Bertucci at abertucci@marincounty.org or 415-669-1288.

English Coach Encourages Conversational Fluency

By Tiyona Pariani

Civic Center Volunteer Chuck Viebrock volunteers Monday mornings at the English Conversation Club held at the Novato Library's main branch on Novato Boulevard. There he helps non-English speakers develop language skills.

He began volunteering six months ago after a 25-year career as a ship captain certified to command any vessel in the world of any tonnage.

Chuck decided to volunteer at the County of Marin after taking a class to help him learn Spanish.

Chuck believes what he does is important because English is the one language used throughout the world. “With the exception of the original British settlers and those from English-speaking areas, everyone who has immigrated here, plus the Native Americans, has had to learn to speak it,” he says.

Library Assistant Maria Lee Goodrich is Chuck's staff supervisor and praises his work. “Chuck is a pleasure to work with,” said Maria Lee.

“He is always expanding our horizons with his ‘Ship Days as Captain’ and teaching about the world around us, whether it be where he has explored or what is happening in areas around us today.”

Chuck is from Queens, New York, and has lived 41 years in Novato with his wife Rebecca, a prominent soprano singer and teacher. He has one son and two grandchildren.

Besides teaching, Chuck is devoted to nature photography, especially documenting bird migrations throughout Northern California.

“Many recent immigrants to the US know basic English but lack the confidence to speak it,” Chuck says. “Being able to volunteer with this class allows me to help them improve their confidence.”

Chuck’s biggest pleasure from volunteering is working with people who are open to learning.

He enjoys helping with homework, meeting people from different cultures and languages, and learning more about other countries from his students than if he only turned on the TV.
Happy Anniversary!

Happy Anniversaries this month and thank them for their involvement.

26 YEARS
Art Marthinsen (San Rafael), Health Program Consultant, Community Development Agency

24 YEARS
Linda Davis (Sausalito), Consumer Mediator, District Attorney’s Office

22 YEARS
Dan Healy (Woodacre), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

22 YEARS
Shirley Trimble (Mill Valley), Volunteer View Newsletter Writer, Human Resources

19 YEARS
John Pope (Novato), Search & Rescue Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

16 YEARS
James Selfridge (San Anselmo), Aide, Fire Department

15 YEARS
Tom Zarraonandia (Novato), Steward, Marin County Parks

13 YEARS
Sue Baty (Pt. Reyes), Knitting Instructor, Point Reyes Library

11 YEARS
Emily Cushman (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

9 YEARS
Larry Atkinson (San Carlos), Catherine Way (Larkspur), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Susan Bunker (San Rafael), Library Beyond Walls Liaison, Marin County Free Library

7 YEARS
Scott Mcdaniel (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

8 YEARS
Rick Bartolacelli (San Rafael), Docent, California Room, Civic Center Library

Robert Gehlen (San Rafael), Rich Shelton (Tiburon), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Rich McGrath (San Rafael), Flag Raiser, Cultural Services

7 YEARS
Deborah Gregor (Novato), Event Aide, Human Resources

Terry Norton (San Anselmo), Kathryn Thyret (Mill Valley), Ombudsman Volunteers, HHS

6 YEARS
Bruce Bowser (Bolinas), Duncan Hopkins (Bolinas), Stewards, Marin County Parks

Larken Bradley (San Rafael), Junior Peer Counselor, HHS

Lisa Jack (Novato), Shelver, Novato Library

Scott Mullen (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

5 YEARS
Robert A. Cohen (Mill Valley), Senior Peer Counselor, HHS

Liam Anderson (Corte Madera), Search & Rescue Youth Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

Cachitin Brister (Kentfield), Chaplain, Sheriff’s Office

Valerie Leks (Kentfield), Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) Volunteer, HHS

Timothy Holmes (San Rafael), Sarah Loughran (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Christine Camilleri (Novato), Mounted Patrol, Marin County Parks

Nancy Oswald (San Anselmo), Administrative Aide, Veterans Services Office, HHS

3 YEARS
David Gannon (Corte Madera), Timothy Mahoney (Fairfax), Marion Matthews (Petaluma), Jon Melberg (Kentfield), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Joey Melberg (Kentfield), Sean Sweeney (Larkspur), Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Paul Mineault (San Rafael), Steward, Marin County Parks

Austin Patel (Kentfield), Teen Coding Instructor, Corte Madera Library

Mark Steering (Tamales), Tomales Station Firefighter, Fire Department

1 YEAR
Chrisula Asimos (San Rafael), FAST Volunteer, HHS

Brian Beideman (San Rafael), Gideon Bernstein (San Rafael), Arran Caddy (San Rafael), Gabriel Carillo (San Rafael), Tom Kennedy (San Rafael), Calvin Schrader (San Rafael), Tate Thompson (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Nancy Carlisle (Novato), Michael Fischer (Mill Valley), William Hitt (St. Helena), Ann Ivan (Santa Rosa) Christian Jordan (Mill Valley), Kami Kitchen (San Francisco), Drew Levy (Sonoma), Joe Lopardo (San Francisco), Sean O’Leary (San Rafael), Mark Rudo (Novato), Steven Virshup (Novato), Fire Lookouts, Fire Department

June Bernstein (San Rafael), Cassidy Fragakis (San Rafael), Alexander Marmo (San Rafael), Kyle Nelson (San Rafael), Paul O’Driscoll (San Rafael), Kasie Page (San Rafael), Sofia Shafer (San Rafael), Michael Shirado (San Rafael), Genevieve Wyatt (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

Gary Robards (San Rafael), Survey Archivist, California Room, Marin County Free Library

Who’s New & Welcome!

Jody Berman (Novato), Spanish Tutor, Novato Library

Phil Danskin (Sonoma), Map Archive Docent, Researcher & Cataloger, California Room, Marin County Free Library

Alexander DeGroot (Petaluma), Low Clerk, County Counsel’s Office

David Hernandez (San Rafael), Teen Shelver, South Novato Library

Lorena Paredes (San Rafael), Legal Support Intern, District Attorney’s Office

Sonia Saltzman (Mill Valley), Marin Teen Girl Ambassador, Human Resources

Naydelin Santos (San Rafael), Teen Shelver, South Novato Library

Mia Tokarski (Mill Valley), Marin Teen Girl Ambassador, Human Resources

Ashley Winslow (San Rafael), Legal Support Intern, District Attorney’s Office