

# Skylines

SOUTH SKYLINE ASSOCIATION

www.southskyline.org

October 2014

## General Meeting Announcement

Join us at Savannah-Chanelle Winery

Sunday October 19, 2014

2PM to 4PM

Featuring a book-signing of

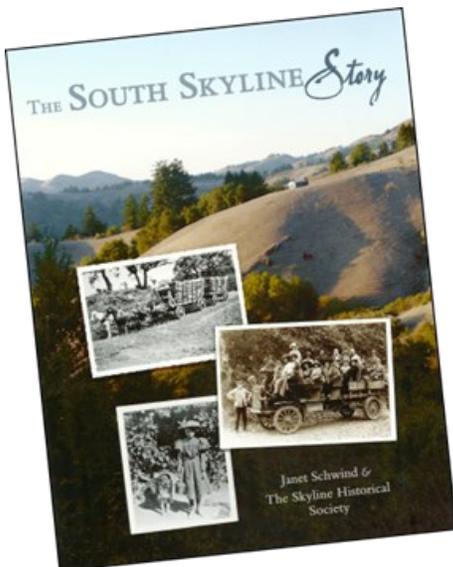
*"The South Skyline Story"*

A fascinating biography of our scenic Skyline region

SSA will provide light refreshments and soft drinks.

For those that wish to sample the Savannah-Chanelle wines, we will sell wine tickets at \$5/ticket. This will be an outdoor event.

Enjoy a relaxing afternoon at the historic Savannah-Chanelle Winery, 23600 Congress Springs Road (Highway 9). Wine tasting, a short program by the Skyline Historical Society members, and the opportunity to purchase your signed copy of **"The South Skyline Story"** will round out this enjoyable afternoon. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served at the historic chateau, with its magnificent views of the Santa Clara Valley and the spacious estate vineyards, one of the oldest vineyards in the Santa Cruz mountain region.



During our afternoon winery visit we will look at a specific section in the book which speaks of the hard-working Pierre and Marie Pourroy family, founders of this estate winery in 1901. You may have the opportunity to meet several of the descendants of this pioneer family who have been invited to join us.

Of course there will be time for your questions and answers from historian and author, Janet Schwind. Almost 20 years of research and work by the Skyline Historical Society has gone into this historical record of our Skyline area, richly supported with historic photographs and detailed maps. **Book price is \$24.95 plus \$2.06 tax, for a total of \$27.01. Check preferred, or cash, no credit cards.**

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### SSA General Meeting Directions

Savannah-Chanelle Winery

From Skyline Blvd. and Highway 9 drive east 4.2 miles. The winery is on the right. Follow the SSA signs.

# What Is Your SSA Board Doing?

By Michael Rowe , SSA President



**SSA Summer General Meeting , Jaqua Ranch**

The SSA Summer General Meeting at Jaqua Ranch was well attended and featured a great slide show presentation by Zara McDonald, Founder and President of Felidae Conservation Fund. For those of you not able to attend, check out the website <http://www.felidaefund.org> -- there is a lot of great info, including photos and videos. Another treat at the meeting was the opportunity to purchase the Skylines History book. I bought two and have been enjoying it ... it is very well written and exceeded my expectations. Your next opportunity to pick up a copy and have it signed by Janet Schwind will be at our fall general meeting (October 19 at Savannah-Chanelle Winery, details on page 1).

## **Highway 9 Construction**

As many of you are aware, Highway 9 from Saratoga Village to Skyline Blvd. is undergoing a two year construction project that includes one-lane traffic light controlled sections. The traffic lights have been the source of several problems: 1) red light runners as impatient drivers ignore the light and drive against oncoming traffic, 2) mis-use of manual signal button intended for bicycle riders. I was in contact with CalTrans to notify them of the issues and explore options to change the situation. CalTrans has since modified the lights and started using flagmen to control traffic during peak work

hours. However, I'd like your input on any issues that still exist regarding red light violations due to poor signal light design/implementation. If you witness blatant violations, please note the date/time and details and email to me so I can collect a log and have another discussion with CalTrans if we need to request further change. Email me your reports to [rowe517@gmail.com](mailto:rowe517@gmail.com).

Regarding those signal buttons intended for bicyclists, help me spread the word that drivers should NOT use those buttons – they do NOT trigger a green light! The purpose of the button is to extend the red light and allow bicyclists to safely make it through before the opposing light turns green. Therefore, motorists pushing the button are not helping their situation and only cause the opposing traffic to endure a longer red light than needed (assuming no bicyclists are present).

## **Well Watch Meter Special SSA Discount Program:**

SSA Members can get a 10% discount on the Well Watch meter by ordering from the Eno Scientific webstore between now and November 25<sup>th</sup> (see article about this unique meter on Page 8.) To take advantage of this deal, use discount code **SCMA10** at their online store: <http://www.enoscientific.com/well-watch-600.htm> **(Continued, Next Page...)**

Keep in mind that there are three versions of the Well Watch 660 instrument. If you want the data logging feature, make sure you order the 660DL (retail price \$479). They are easy to install (I did my own installation) and are fairly flexible in mounting options (they provide several different size adapters for different well head plug sizes and can run from battery source or AC power). Let me know if you need help or guidance. The Eno Scientific website has product brochure, product manual, and FAQ. Also, I've found the company to be very helpful and responsive to my questions. Neither SSA, nor I have any affiliation with Eno Scientific – I only negotiated the discount deal because I was happy with my meter and feel it provides useful data that others can benefit from (BTW, I paid full retail for my meter).

Please feel free to share the discount code with any of your neighbors/friends, but keep in mind this is offer ends Nov. 25.

### **Dangerous Street Racing In the Neighborhood**

Late night racing and vehicle shenanigans continue to grow along Highway 9 and Skyline Blvd. We met with the tri-county CHP departments and CA State Parks representatives (some of the issues are occurring within State Parks parking lots), and the proper authorities are aware of the issue. However, due to limited resources, changes in patrolling can only happen if we provide a good log of incidents (day/time/place) that the authorities can use to justify the need for increasing patrols on targeted days/times that will result in the most effective outcome. To this end, we are reaching out to the community to help log incidents and report them to SSA Board member Dave Anderson at [ssa.road.reports@gmail.com](mailto:ssa.road.reports@gmail.com). Dave will compile the reports and pass the data to the CHP and State Parks representatives.

## Appreciation Plaque Presented to Ruth Waldhauer

by Patti Begley

At the summer SSA General Meeting Ruth Waldhauer was surprised to receive a beautiful plaque in appreciation for all the volunteer hours she has given to the community and the South Skyline Association over the last 20 years. You've probably seen her name many times throughout the *Skylines* newsletter and seen her at the greeting table for most of the SSA general meetings. She is one of the copy editors and authors for this newsletter, she founded and administrates the South Skyline Propane Users Group, she founded the Adopt-A-Highway program, and she is the SSA Membership chairperson. Neighbors and friends enjoyed sharing stories about Ruth and expressing thanks for her contributions.

Board member list is found on page 16

# Shaping the Future of SSA

by Michael Rowe, SSA President

Have you ever considered why so many past presidents and other board members and chairpersons are still involved in SSA activities and decision-making, some for many years after they held a position? The simple answer is that the SSA is vibrant and inclusive. Anyone who volunteers for the SSA has a built-in team of helpers and idea generators as part of the package. We also strive to keep our group healthy by bringing in fresh voices and perspectives to combine with the institutional memory and wisdom of long-time volunteers. If you believe in what SSA is doing, remember we need leaders to organize all the wonderful work our members do. This is where you come in! If you have ideas, musings, opinions or any other input about the direction of SSA, please consider a leadership position. You could even “learn the ropes” by sharing a position with someone who has done the job before.

## More specifically, we have several urgent needs:

- ◇ First, we are forming a team to manage the quarterly publication of the SKYLINES newsletter. We are seeking volunteers who have skills in communicating, teamwork and creativity. Some expertise in Microsoft Word or other publishing software is needed. Ideally we would like a team of 3 people to share the work of answering emails, reviewing articles, and laying out the newsletter. By sharing and rotating responsibilities the time commitment will not be significant and can be fairly flexible. It’s a fun job, and a great way to meet neighbors. If you have some spare time and would like to help your community stay connected and informed of local information and events, we urgently want you on the team!
- ◇ Secondly, and no less important, we need a back-up person to help with the membership duties, including SPUG participation. Currently this critical role is solely managed by Ruth Waldhauer. Our idea is to find someone who Ruth can mentor and share the role with.

Of course for those who wish to volunteer without official position or title, we welcome you as well in our all volunteer organization! Please feel free to contact us via e-mail ([ssa\\_activities@yahoo.com](mailto:ssa_activities@yahoo.com)), phone (my landline: 408-872-1775), postal mail (SSA, 22400 Skyline Boulevard Box 35, La Honda, CA 94020) or in person at any of our events or activities.

## Adopt-A-Highway by Ruth Waldhauer

On Monday, July 21, South Skyline Association (SSA) and Skyline Historical Society (SHS) volunteers conducted their bi-monthly litter clean-up.

Ami Jaqua and friends cleaned their section of Skyline, Rapley Ranch Road to Old La Honda Road, on Thursday, July 24. While picking up litter, Ami and her volunteers found a suitcase filled with women’s undies together with men’s sox filled with sand. Most curious. Wish we had a photo.

SSA & SHS volunteers are responsible for gathering litter every two months. The sweep takes about an hour and a half. So far over 160 names are on the honor role listing those who have participated. We love getting new recruits. Please volunteer once. You will find it both rewarding and fun.

Contact Ruth Waldhauer at [ruth.waldhauer3@gmail.com](mailto:ruth.waldhauer3@gmail.com)



Shown (left to right) in photo are Doug Winslow, Armen Leonian, Robert Bradford, and Jerry Peters. Ruth Waldhauer took the photo.

# South Skyline Fire & Rescue News

by Andy Seigel, Captain, SSF&R

We were devastated to hear about the passing of retired Captain George Johnson. George was a member of South Skyline Fire & Rescue for 32 of its 40 years. After he retired, he continued to participate as an officer of our non-profit. He created our free fire fitting and water storage programs. He was an excellent instructor, and a good friend.

## Training

We finished out “spring training” by attending a one-day wildland training exercise at the end of June at Fort Hunter Liggett in King City. We brought the water tender and joined resources from Scotts Valley, Aptos, Branciforte, and Soquel. Our newest firefighter joined me on this trip. It was a long day, but very worthwhile, as live-fire training opportunities are rare.

## Firefighter Spotlight

We’re glad to bring back the spotlight. Allow us to introduce Adam Hull.

Adam graduated from the 2014 volunteer academy in April. He’s part of a trial program for volunteers who do not live in our immediate response area. Instead, he works a “shift” at one of our stations several days a week. Since May, he’s responded to about 25 incidents. When asked what he enjoys about the position, he says “I like being there for someone who is having the worst day of their life. I also love learning something new every day; no two calls are the same.” Adam is planning a career in the fire services and is gaining valuable field experience as a volunteer.

When he’s not working as a volunteer firefighter, you can find him managing Five Guys Burger on Almaden!

We have some candidates for next year, but we still need more volunteers. We have only a few weeks left to get people signed up for 2015. If you are interest-

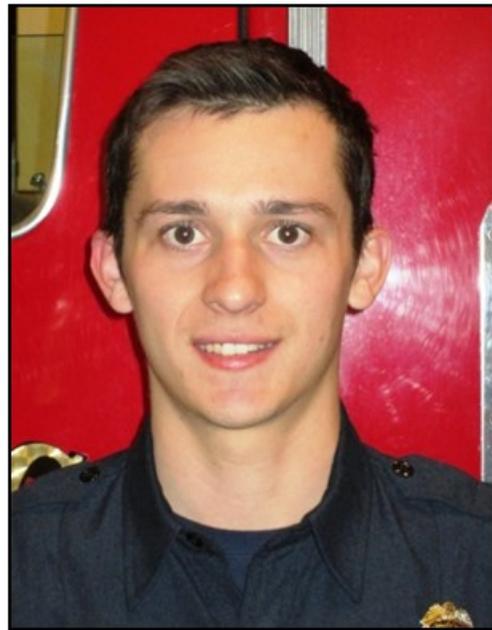
ed, please contact us. You can find a complete description of the volunteer on our website, <http://southskylinefire.org>.

## Did you know?

The South Skyline Firefighters own and maintain several water tanks for fire suppression in strategic locations in our response area – part of George’s legacy. We’ve been working on a project to enable better access to one of them. This will allow us to get an engine or water tender right up alongside the tank. We had a gate, but needed parts. We’d like to thank the following local residents who helped us out:

- Henry Hardy donated steel posts and some angle iron for hinges
- Rob Schmidlen fabricated the hinges
- George Hall (Maxicon Construction) provided mobile welding equipment and personnel to affix the hinges.

With improved access, we are considering expanding our water storage capacity in the coming years.



# 2014 FREE FALL CHIPPING PROGRAM

11/10/2014

SOUTH SKYLINE FIRE SAFE COUNCIL IS OFFERING FREE CHIPPING FOR DEFENSIBLE FIRE SPACE CLEARING FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMEOWNERS

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup>  
CHIPPING TO BE DONE ON OR ABOUT NOVEMBER 10, 2014**

- HOMES MUST BE LOCATED WITHIN THE SSFSC BOUNDARIES
- APPLICANT BRUSH PILES WILL BE INSPECTED AND APPROVED PRIOR TO THE CHIPPING DATE
- CHIPPING FOR EXISTING HOMES, NO NEW CONSTRUCTION OR FUEL REDUCTION AREAS
- FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SSFSC PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.SOUTHSKYLINEFIRESAFE.ORG](http://WWW.SOUTHSKYLINEFIRESAFE.ORG)

## FOR APPLICATION AND POLICY

EMAIL ED HAYES AT [edhayes@wildblue.net](mailto:edhayes@wildblue.net) OR JOHN DELONG AT [jmdelong@aol.com](mailto:jmdelong@aol.com)

## SPUG QUARTERLY REPORT

by Ruth Waldhauer

Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG) was formed to benefit SSA members. For information about joining, or for members wishing current information on the agreement, please contact Ruth Waldhauer at [ruth.waldhauer3@gmail.com](mailto:ruth.waldhauer3@gmail.com) or 650-948-1466. Information is also available on our website: [WWW.SouthSkyline.org](http://WWW.SouthSkyline.org).

SSA has agreements with Amerigas, Kamps Propane, Suburban Propane, and FerrelGas. The open market price is about \$1.00/gallon higher than the SPUG price. Prices are

subject to change as frequently as wholesale prices change. The prices SSA posts are for the first of the month. Our SPUG rate is based on a keep-full basis, not will-call service.

You are not required to pay sales tax on propane if you do not have natural gas available where you use propane. If you get your propane from Amerigas, you will need to submit a sales tax exemption form. Contact Amerigas for the form.

	Amerigas	Suburban/San Jose	Suburban/Scotts Valley	Kamps Propane	Ferrell Gas
Jan	2.59	3.549	3.199	2.69	2.64
Feb	2.84	3.659	3.499	2.96	2.79
March	2.9	3.699	3.599	2.79	2.65
April	2.49	2.499	2.499	2.09	2.02
May	2.09	2.499	2.399	2.09	1.82
June	1.99	2.499	2.19	1.99	1.77
July	1.99	2.499	2.099	1.76	1.75
August	1.99	2.499	1.97	1.75	1.75
September	1.99	2.499	1.97	1.79	1.80

\*Prices shown \$ per Gallon

**Those whose SSA membership has lapsed will be disqualified from receiving the benefit of SPUG price for propane.**

# Turkey Mullein Deals With the Dry

By Sarah Schoen

Late in the summer's dusty ground, and before the fall rains, a fuzzy plant emerges, visible in contrast with the pale oat straw. The gray green patches of annual turkey mullein are a surprise.

Turkey mullein (*Croton setigerus*, formerly *Eremocarpus setigerus*) grows in matted rosettes, 1 to 8" high. Leaves are 3-veined, oval, 1/3 to 1 1/2", with leaf stems of equal length. Adapted to the heat, leaves and stems are covered with forked, bristly hairs. This increases the relative humidity and reduces water loss around the stomata, where water is exchanged for carbon dioxide. *Setigerus* means bearing bristles. When crushed, the leaves have a lemony smell.

Tiny, greenish to sand-colored flowers bloom from June to October. There are separate male and female blossoms on the same plant. The male (staminate) flowers are in clusters at the ends of the stems. Those who can see well close up will observe 6 to 10 tiny exerted stamens. The female (pistillate) flowers are in axials below.

Smooth, mottled seeds are about 1/6", residing 1 per capsule. Turkey mullein seeds are eaten by birds, particularly turkeys and doves. The plants are also known as dove mullein and dove weed.

Turkey mullein stems and leaves contain a narcotic poison, used by many California Indian tribes as a fish stunner. Spanish named the plant *Yerba del Pescado*, herb of the fish. The plant was also used medicinally by many California tribes. A poultice of leaves was used as an analgesic for internal pain, or an internal decoction was taken for fevers and chills (Concow) or for headaches (Kawaiisu). A root decoction (Ohlone/Costanoan and Pomo, Kashaya) or a decoction of smashed plants (Pomo) was used as a



Photo by Sarah Schoen

treatment for dysentery or diarrhea. Stems and leaves were mashed to externally treat horse wounds (Diegueno). However, the plant, especially in hay, is reportedly toxic to livestock.

Turkey mullein is not related to introduced European common mullein, although the leaves of both species are fuzzy. Common mullein can be distinguished by tall spikes of bright yellow flowers.

Turkey mullein is found in dry, open, and disturbed areas, especially along roadsides and trails. It occurs from Washington State to Arizona below 3000 feet.



# Water Wise: Automated Well Water Level Measurement

by Michael Rowe

*[NOTE: Neither I nor the SSA are affiliated with Eno Scientific. This article is not a product endorsement; it is a report of one option for automatic well water level measurement.]*

In the July Skylines newsletter, Larry Watson discussed a DIY well water level meter. The Wolfmeter, as Larry has dubbed it, is an inexpensive and relatively simple way to manually take water level measurements. For some wells, lowering a measuring line down the well can be difficult, if not impossible. Additional risks with this method are possible contamination or a persistent snag. Also, one-time or random measurements can be misleading. Of greater benefit is frequent and regular data over the course of a year or more to fully understand the health and trends of your well water supply. Not wanting to manually measure my well water level on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis, I searched for a more automated solution. I found several commercial solutions, but they were all \$1000 and above. Just when I nearly managed to justify spending \$1000 on a professional meter, I discovered Eno Scientific's Well Watch meter that is meant for permanent residential installation and is priced below \$500. Even better, the Well Watch meter uses sound waves and does not require lowering a probe or tape into the well.

Other meters I found also employed acoustic waves to measure the water level, but I learned that not all sound waves are the same. Depending on the wavelength of the sonic pulse, imperfections in the well such as open perforations, open fissures or pockets, or even pipe fittings can cause inaccurate depth measurements. Also, sound pulses tend to travel in straight paths and reflect off any imperfection along the path – the degree to which this happens depends on the sound frequency. Higher frequency waves are more directional and can be reflected by smaller obstructions. The Well Watch meter uses a low frequency wave (approximately 50hz) that is designed to act like an air pressure wave. At these low

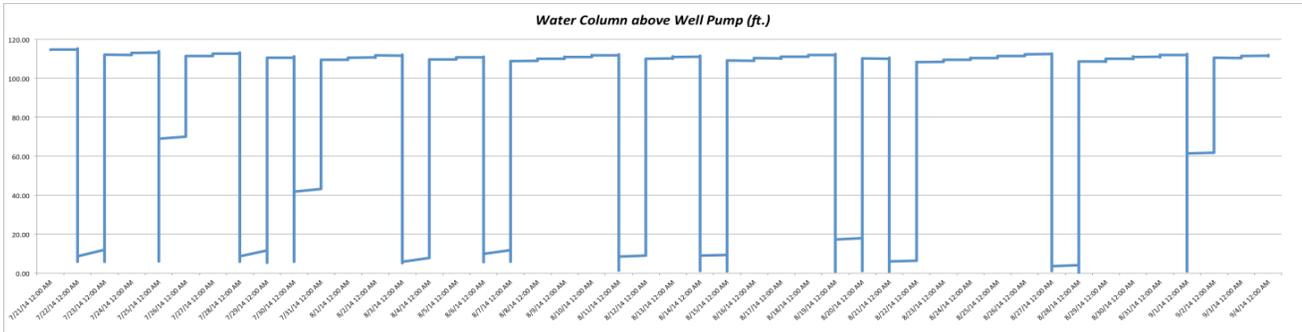
frequencies, the air fills all the space along the sound path, flowing around obstacles and through curves in the pipe. Consequently, the reflections from most pipe couplings and minor obstructions become insignificant.

The Well Watch 660 is available in three different versions. I chose the 660DL for the data logging feature. The unit has enough internal memory to log a depth measurement every minute, every day for 50 years! There is a USB plug that allows you to plug in a laptop (PC, Mac, or Linux) to transfer the data for graphing and analysis. Installing the meter was fairly easy and went quickly once I installed a weather-proof AC outlet to plug the power supply in to (it can also be run from a DC battery supply).

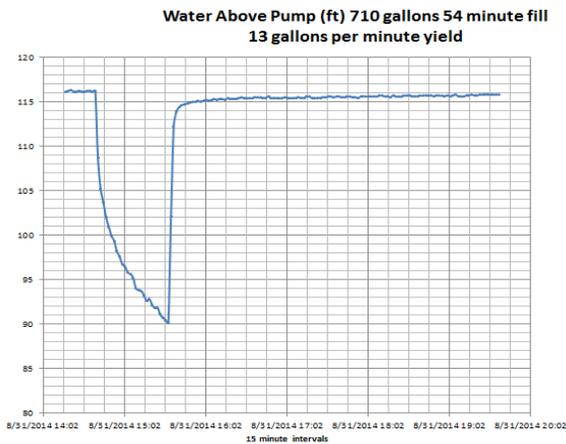


My 660DL meter mounted on the well head and powered by AC source .

Data for Michael Rowe's well water level.



I've now been collecting data continuously, every 5 minutes, since July 21. The data is saved as a text file and I use Excel to graph it. Looking at the graph, one can see that my well pump switches on about every two or three days to top off my reservoir tank. The pump quickly pumps down the column of water and will cycle on/off until the tank is full (thus my pump can out-pace the water recharge rate in my well). Closer analysis of the data shows me how long the pump cycles before the reservoir is full, how long it takes the water column above the pump to recover, and what the trend is over time (i.e. is the average height of water above my pump stable or decreasing? Is it taking longer pumping cycles to top of reservoir tank?). This is extremely useful data and going forward, the data will show me seasonal trends and how the well health is impacted by the drought. I regret that I didn't start collecting data years ago, before our current drought.



Larry Watson supplemented his manual Wolfmeter with a Well Watch 660DL meter and collected this initial data for 5 hours on his well during one tank fill.

From this initial data, one learns that Larry's well water level does not get pumped down as drastically as my well, and his recharge rate is much faster. If you'd like to collect similar data on your well, you should consider taking advantage of the 10% discount (see details of deal in the "What Is Your SSA Board Doing" column in this issue of Skylines) For more information on the Well Watch meter go the Eno Scientific website: <http://www.enoscientific.com/well-watch-600.htm>.

## Sudden Oak Death Updates

by Jane Manning

There is an upcoming **workshop on managing oaks with SOD and drought** on SUN 10/19/14 at 10 am at the [Oak Grove Picnic Area, Foothills Park, 3300 Page Mill Rd, Los Altos, CA](#). Please contact: Sue Welch [sodblitz09@earthlink.net](mailto:sodblitz09@earthlink.net)

The 2014 SOD blitz results are starting to come out. They will soon be posted on Matteo's website. Spring 2014 was the Skyline area's 4th year joining the invasive species survey, a citizen scientist data-gathering effort led by Dr. Matteo Garbelotto of UC Berkeley. The new website is: <http://nature.berkeley.edu/garbelottowp/> where you can also find the free "SOD Map" app for your smartphone. The app allows you to see the level of infection risk in your physical location based on data gathered by participants of the annual SOD blitzes among others.

The Skylines website will soon include some resources pertinent for residents who wish to learn more about SOD prevention, treatment, and the growing body of on-going research on this important invasive species, including articles on how SOD interacts with drought and fire risk. I hope you'll check it out!

# New Groundwater Management Laws and Impacts to Residents By Steven Wolf



Over the past decades there were periods when there was a lot of talk about the State or County requiring residents who had

wells to put meters on them. We were then supposed to send reports, to some agency, with our usage statistics. Before the close of this year's State lawmaking sessions, the State Legislature passed two bills, which now do just that. Governor Brown has until the end of September to sign them. The bills are AB1739 and SB1168. Both deal heavily with requirements to define groundwater basins throughout the State, rate them as to priority of concern, and provide new or existing agencies the mechanisms to acquire data to determine basin boundaries, groundwater capacities, and to limit, if need be, extraction quantities based on the aquifer structure and longevity of extraction productivity and storage. Fees are to be established and penalties issued against noncompliant extractors.

Before people get freaked out about the well meter requirement, required reports, and fee structures, I strongly suggest they pull up the bill languages and carefully read through them. I did that and have found in both, exemption clauses. From what I gather, the clauses exempt most all-residential small demand users from having to comply with either law.

AB1739 defines language to set up the groundwater basins and provides definitions of all related parts. Section 10 of the bill is related to compliance of groundwater reporting requirements. Section 10, 5202 (b) requires extractors to file a re-

port on extraction usage by December 15 each calendar year. Section 10, part 5.2, 5201 (c) provides definitions for all terms used in the bill. There is a term "De Minimis Extractor" in that section. Section 11, 10721 (e), defines what is a "De Minimis Extractor". It is defined as any extractor who uses two acre-feet or less of water per year. Section 10, 5202 (c) (1) states that if an extractor is a "De Minimis Extractor" it is exempt from all provisions of the bill. Two acre-feet per year, if my math is right, amounts to 638,400 gallons per year or approximately 1750 gallons per day. Everyone who uses less than that amount per day is exempt, no reports and no meters on wells required. One should also read section 12, 10726.4 (a). This is a verbose section and talks a lot about how the new or existing agencies can regulate the amount of water you can use, prevent drilling of new wells, cause abandonment of wells, and a host of other nasty "carry a big stick" things they can do.

SB1168 defines Basin design, management, usage, and those Basins currently in existence that are exempt from the law. It also defines the need for annual Basin reports and what data they should contain. Section 10725.4 (a) states that a "groundwater sustainability agency", hereto referred to as "GSA", may conduct investigations on extractor facilities and properties for purposes of ensuring compliance of extractor. Section 10725.6 states the GSA may require registration of an extractor and its facilities. Section 10725.8 (a) requires a water-measuring device satisfactory to the GSA. The good news is, section 10725.8 (e) states that these sections do not apply to "De Minimis Extractors". So, there is no need to

register your well, do a report, or meter your well if you qualify as a "DME". The following sections after that talks about the GSA having authority to take over facilities, water management, aquifer usage, transfer water elsewhere, modify existing water rights, mitigation of non-compliance and whole suite of other nasty stuff.

One point I'd like to make regarding the laws requiring registration of wells. The State requires all well drillers to file with the State a drillers report. On it, it provides the owner name, location, description of the well before and after, a geologic stratigraphy column, and description of where water was first found and completion information. It also contains a description of materials used to complete the well. All well owners should have received a copy of that report for your information and record keeping. These reports, under State Law, are categorized as "confidential". The general public cannot have access to them. Any governmental agency however, can have access to individual logs as they see fit. California is one of a few states that have this confidentiality law. Specialized engineering or developmental agencies can get exemptions and have access to the data. The bottom line is the State already has all the data, and more, to meet the requirements they specify in the "registration" report. You, as a domestic well owner, should not have to register your well, whether a DME or not. Clearly the Legislators do not have grip on what they are trying to accomplish.

After spending a copious amount of my time reading and assessing these two bills. **(Continued on Page 11...)**

(...New Groundwater Continued from Page 10) It is clear it will take years to actually implement the requirements of both laws. Both need to be signed by Brown, if one fails so does the other. Additionally, there are no appropriations assigned to either. Funding comes from fees, costs borne by owners, and penalties.

Don't just rely on what I have presented here. You need to be fully informed about these issues to be able to deal with the consequences and make smart decisions. More importantly, we need to keep the rumor mill at bay and be certain as to what we say to others and interact with them. Another word of caution, water companies like that in Las Cumbres, and folks who use large amounts of water for trees or agricultural use need to study the laws carefully to determine where they fit in the scheme of things.

Barbara Bekins, SSA Board Member, is a geologist with USGS. Barbara plans to attend the September 17 Groundwater Resources Association dinner talk on groundwater sustainability in California. Barbara Bekins is traveling now, but will have an update for us at the October 19 SSA General Meeting.

*Steve Wolf is a geologist, retired from USGS, who lived in our Skyline area until he moved to Shasta in 2001. Steve provided so much help to locals who suffered loss of water after the 1989 earthquake. He still is a good friend to the SSA community.*

## 40th Anniversary of the South Skyline Volunteer Firefighters *by Dick Schwind*

Forty years ago two separate volunteer fire departments started along Skyline Boulevard. First was the South Skyline VFD serving a large area from north of Page Mill - Alpine to south of Black Road and down the feeder roads, generally until meeting another fire department. Its engine was housed at the Cal Fire Saratoga Summit Station. Shortly after the Las Cumbres Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) was started in order to fulfill the requirement dictated by the Santa Cruz County to have a volunteer fire department by the time the twentieth family moved into Las Cumbres. An old fire truck was found and it was housed in an existing shed. For both groups the enthusiasm to serve was strong and the homeowners young. As time went on, the number of volunteers in both volunteer companies diminished significantly. Seeing this trend, in 2006, representatives from both companies – George Johnson and Andy Seigel – recommended to Cal Fire that the two companies be combined into a single company,

South Skyline Fire & Rescue.

By the early seventies essentially all our various small communities along the Skyline had been or were being established. Saratoga Summit Station was only open during the fire season. There were essentially no emergency services. Accident victims were at the mercy of passersby. Skyline Blvd hadn't been discovered so there weren't many highway accidents, but that was rapidly changing.

The South Skyline Association had been formed 5 years earlier and it was realized among us there was a need for a volunteer fire department. Bill Schafer was the local ranger of CDF, the 'CA Division of Fire and Forestry' (former name, now Cal Fire). He encouraged us, said he would help arrange for training, find an old fire engine for us, and arrange for housing it at their Saratoga Summit Station. No one wanted to take the responsibility of organizing this

new group, so I agreed to organize the 'South Skyline Volunteer Fire Department' (and stayed on for 17 years). By September 1974 we had a dozen volunteers, an awful 1939 fire truck that had been abandoned in a canyon on the coast, and CDF training us. Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties both provided funding to the Cal Fire Felton Unit to 'mother' us. Every couple of years we got a better surplus CDF fire engine, so in five years we had an old but great engine.

Enthusiasm was high. Most eligible men and some women volunteered. Other community members came to the fire station on a monthly Sunday morning to cook us breakfast (that didn't last too long) before our CDF-led training began. That training was minimal - a weekend 'academy' training plus two monthly sessions. Only basic first aid plus unprotected CPR was required. We bolstered that by having Dr. Fowkes as a volunteer, a crucial asset! We had our own monthly training session at night



# George Herbert Johnson

November 15, 1952 – September 5, 2014

## Skyline Resident

by April Johnson Stearns

George Herbert Johnson, 61, passed away peacefully on Friday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, at Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose, surrounded by his three children, April Johnson Stearns, Dale Johnson, and Kyle Johnson, and his two brothers, Milo Johnson and Craig Johnson.

It is a tremendous sadness and honor that I, April, now write his obituary. When my father was diagnosed with Stage IV Pancreatic Cancer this last spring, I was with him in the doctor's office. It was the worst day our family has ever faced, and yet even then my father acted with his customary grace and strength. After we left the doctor's office, we stood in the parking lot. I was stunned, struggling to keep it together. He pulled me to him in a big bear hug, comforting me when I should have been comforting him.

There is so much to say about my dad's last months, weeks, minutes, but I don't want his life to be summarized by the cancer. The truth is, his life was absolutely full. Bursting! This was a man who squeezed as many minutes as he could out of each day. When most of us barely roll out of bed with enough time to get to work, he was up doing work around the house before putting on his work clothes. When most of us were turning on the TV and relaxing at the end of the day, he was pulling his jeans on and heading outside to work on his farm until sunset, or even after. It was the land that he loved: being out in it, on it.

But I digress.

My father, George, was born on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1952 in New York, and was the second of four sons of Milo and Evelyn Johnson, known locally as the couple behind the Peacock Tree Farm. Raised and educated first in New York and then in the Bay Area, George graduated from Los Gatos High School in 1970. It was here that he met his wife, Grete Hafstad. They married on a rainy afternoon, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976, in Los Gatos, and honeymooned in Lake Tahoe. Soon after they moved to what would become their life-long home on Skyline Blvd – a place they named with their matching initials: GHJ Tree Farm. I was their first child, and I was born in March 1977. In 1980 and 1983, respectively, their sons were born: Dale and Kyle.

It may come as a surprise to know George proudly obtained his Private Pilot's License in 1972.

George followed in his father's footsteps, working at IBM by day, and in the Christmas Trees on Skyline by evening and weekends. At Christmas, he took some of his trees to the Peacock Tree Farm to sell, and later opened his own choose-and-cut Christmas Tree Farm (GHJ Tree Farm), which he operated as late as last year. He also cultivated an orchard of apple trees, primarily (with some pears, nectarines, peaches, cherries, and persimmons thrown in, too). He was extremely proud of these apples, and sold and shared them generously over the years. Many knew him for his annual apple cider-making parties.

Soon after moving to Skyline, George joined the volunteer fire department, which he ultimately captained for 32 years. In 2007 he retired from his long career at IBM (first in the machine shop, then in procurement), and in 2010 he retired from the South Skyline Volunteer Fire Department, Company 21.

When I was growing up, if he wasn't at IBM, on a fire call, or in the orchard on a tractor or up a ladder, he was often found cycling with my mother, or doing any of the numerous activities of parenthood. He was the best dad to us kids that we could ever hope for. He was a true friend and mentor to us.

George is survived by his daughter April Stearns and her husband Joseph and George's granddaughter Nia of Santa Cruz, CA; his son Dale Johnson and his partner Amy Mecchi and George's granddaughter Ella of Coarsegold, CA; his son Kyle Johnson and his wife Whitney, and George's grandchild on the way of Coos Bay, OR. He is also survived by his brother Milo Johnson and his wife Jill of Palo Cedro, CA; and his brother Craig Johnson and his wife Ramona of Colorado Springs, CO. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews, aunts and cousins.

George was preceded in death by his wife Grete; his father Milo A. Johnson; his mother Evelyn Herbert Johnson; and his younger brother Jerome Johnson.

More about George's cancer journey can be found on my blog, I [Heart] My Life: <http://aprilandjoseph.typepad.com>

## Remembering George Johnson

by Dick Schwind

George Johnson, a very special Skyline resident. This remembrance notes his exceptional, special commitment he made to our Skyline community. George was a quiet, exceptional thinker that seemed to draw the admiration of all who knew him.

George joined the South Skyline Volunteer Fire Department, then in its third year, when he arrived on Skyline. He served as a volunteer, always keeping up with the heavy demands for training required and desired, and probably responded to upwards of 1500 callouts during his 33 year career. This was a huge time commitment, possibly not topped by any other of our great community of volunteers! See the adjoining article on the 40th anniversary of the Volunteer Fire and Rescue for some special remembrances.

Most notable was George's great skill, always seeming to know the right thing to do all the time at all emergencies. We other volunteers learned so much from him, as did more than one professional fire fighter. After he retired from the volunteers he was a huge help to the South Skyline FireSafe Council. Thank you, George, for an adult lifetime of most outstanding community service!

SSA's Note:

The South Skyline Association and South Skyline FireSafe Council are planning community memorial for George, and further information for private donations will be announced. Look for updates at [www.southskyline.org](http://www.southskyline.org).

**(...40th Anniversary Continued from Page 11)** (most incidences are at night) stringing out hoses, pumping water and dragging 'victims' out of homes. No learning experience is better than stumbling about at night with inadequate lighting! In four months we were made an active fire department by CDF and almost immediately on a soggy January night we were called out to a fire in a foam dome residence at Pacific High School. Fortunately, the CDF Captain kept us upwind of the structure as we had not yet been issued breathing apparatus! Both the CDF and our engine got stuck in the gooey mess of a mud driveway and local Chris Berryessa pulled each engine up out with his little 4-wheel Scout. For many years Pacific High provided us with unplanned annual structural fire training due to the poor wiring in their buildings.

Most important, CDF got the two counties to fund keeping Saratoga Summit station open all winter, initially with two professional firefighters on duty around the clock. This provided the area with good emergency services considering our location. For reference Cal Fire Alma Station at Lexington Reservoir is still closed in the winter as it does not have volunteers connected with it.

The volunteers made the first set of map books with homeowner's names and what addresses existed. Callouts mostly

used the homeowner's name. Each volunteer had a stationary radio unit that could be activated by CDF Felton from their radio towers. Usually someone's unit or a bunch of units didn't get activated, so we had a telephone tree for about four of the spouses to call all the volunteers. Early on we were called out 50 to 70 times a year, it seemed about half in the middle of the night. Someone went for the fire truck; the others went straight to the scene as the truck could only haul about one extra person. About 85% of the callouts were for highway accidents and rescues, the remainders were fires. Several years after our start, the SSA raised the money and bought the expensive 'Jaws of Life' to give the volunteers for cutting up vehicles to rescue victims.

The number of volunteers was generally about 20 in the first ten years and 15 for most of the next ten. Various reasons, seen by volunteer fire companies nationwide, contributed to a decline in the number of volunteers.

This was the height of the hippie age on Skyline Devils Canyon, aka 'Aquarian Valley', which was 'abandoned property'. It was a favorite place for the hippies to hike into for a 'party' - and fall down a cascade or falls. Maybe a dozen of these happened over the years, usually in the winter. Invariably the word of the accident got out and we got the callout at dusk,

so it was dark by the time we arrived. Aptly named, Devils Canyon has extremely steep sides, so hundreds of feet of rope had to be set up just to get to the victim after hiking in about a mile. We would load the victim in a stretcher; six firefighters would pick up that burden, and get pulled up the canyon a rope length at a time by at least seven pullers. This was then repeated with the next length of rope until we were up to a rough trail that led up and out. Eventually we got a wheel for the gurney for the trail out. It was a good night if we were home by 2AM.

There are two bronze plaques to the South Skyline volunteers mounted on the side of the Saratoga Summit Cal Fire Station. They list 37 volunteers in the department in the first twenty years. We were almost all dedicated volunteers with an excellent percentage responding to callouts, but George Johnson (33 years?) and Pat Congdon (probably 25 years) always seemed to be more skilled and more dedicated. They would be at the center helping in any emergency, usually with Vicki DeMartini (35 years) assisting. Eventually George's wife Grete and two sons, Dale and Kyle were also volunteers!

Most of the volunteers responded to the callout to the Saratoga Summit Station for the Loma Prieta Earthquake (1989) in spite **(Continued on Page 14...)**

**(...40th Anniversary Continued from Page 14)** of cleanup we all needed to be doing. The station had no emergency generator so (the radio was down and the telephone was also out. We relied upon people driving up to report problems. Another notable turnout happened when George and Bill James took the tanker truck to the Lexington Reservoir for the Loma Prieta Fire (mid 80's) and for two long days performed the valuable service of pumping water from the reservoir to fill empty fire trucks. As a group we responded to many wildland fires and structural fires, occasionally entering burning buildings with breathing apparatus.

The Las Cumbres VFD had quite a different history. With few exceptions their area of operation was only Las Cumbres for most of the first 20 years so there were very few callouts. The community members built a firehouse and the quality of their fire engines and equipment kept improving. Early on the volunteer's training came from a professional fire fighter from the Santa Cruz area, one weekend morning and one evening a

month. Eventually Cal Fire assumed the responsibility for providing high quality training. As with the South Skyline Volunteers the number of volunteers was initially about 20, but that gradually decreased to 9 or 10 by the time the two companies merged in 2006.

Early chiefs (later the company head was denoted 'captain' to fit into the county system) of note were Madeline Beaudoin and Mike Falarski. Arnie Wernick became the captain in about 1991 and remained so for nearly 20 years, though sharing the lead with George Johnson after the merger. During Arnie's tenure Santa Cruz County acquired a newer and much larger fire engine. That required a large effort and cost to the Las Cumbres community to enlarge the fire station. Arnie's volunteer service lasted for 33 years, retiring last year. Andy Seigel has now been the Captain of the South Skyline Fire and Rescue Company for three years. The present six volunteers are called out on responses of all types about 20 times a month. Since 2008 they have responded to dozens of fires and hundreds each of vehicle

accidents and medical emergencies.

A notable event (certainly to me!) since the merger of the two companies that showed the skill of our volunteer team was the Schwind wildland fire in July 2008, the likely cause being lightning. The fire was discovered in the middle of the night by a neighbor a couple of miles away.

The local Cal Fire crews were out battling another wildland fire in south Santa Cruz County. George Johnson and Andy Seigel were covering Saratoga Summit, asleep in the day-room when the callout came. George Johnson led the attack on the fire, commanding both South Skyline engines. They were joined some time later by resources from Kings Mountain and La Honda volunteer units. The spread of the fire, about 3 acres in a Doug fir - mixed hardwood forest, was stopped by the time the volunteers were relieved in the morning by a Cal Fire crew. This fire showed the unaided firefighting skill of our volunteers.

***The Skyline community thanks past and present volunteers for all your invaluable dedicated service to our community.***

# Whole Mountain Source Book

by Michele Witten

The Twentieth Edition of the Whole Mountain Source Book is in the planning stages. If you have a business that services the Santa Cruz Mountains you will benefit by placing an ad in the book and putting your information at the fingertips of your neighbors. The Whole Mountain Source Book is an annual publication and website resource for the unincorporated mountain communities of the Santa Cruz Mountains that is filled with useful information and advertisers who work in our mountains. Books are delivered free of charge to all rural routes in the Los Gatos, Santa Cruz Mountains, and Redwood Estates Post Office Boxes. The Skyline area receives books at the South Skyline Association April meeting or at the Skywood Trading Post. Extra copies go to the realtors, stores, churches, schools, and various other community businesses. If you own a business or service that would benefit from advertising in the book and on the websites, email [advertise@wmsb.net](mailto:advertise@wmsb.net) or call 408-353-3535. Prices are very reasonable.

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SSA Calendar-General Meeting –  
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