



June 2018

Annual Meeting—the Logistics!

The Fitch Mountain Association's annual meeting will be held at the Villa Chanticleer's outdoor BBQ area on Sunday July 8th from 1:00-4:00.

Come early to pick up a meeting info packet, make a name tag, and renew/initiate your FMA membership and receive your ballot. You need to be a member to vote. You can renew/initiate your membership before the meeting at the website (www.FitchMtn.org) to speed things up! For details, see page 3. Officer candidates' statements are also on page 3.

The get-together will begin with a BBQ lunch. The Association will provide the plates, cups, utensils, etc., beverages, and burgers (beef or veggie). We will also have chips and dips for you to munch on when you arrive as well as cold drinks. It is very important that you **RSVP by Friday June 29** to: Kathryn@fmafunappreciationkathryn17@gmail.com **with the number attending and your choices of a meat or veggie burger** so Kathryn can shop for enough supplies and food and drink. (The e-address does not "link" from this newsletter, but you can click [here](#) under **Party Time** on the Home page of the website to start your r.s.v.p. email.)

Please **bring a picnic dish to share**, going by the following last name "assignments."

A-F: side dishes (pasta/potato/beans)

G-L: Veggies or fruit

M-R: Dessert

S-Z: Salad (greens)

A Cal Fire rep will share lessons learned from the October fires and specific ways we can protect our homes here on Fitch Mountain. This important meeting is a chance to renew your Mountain friendships and make new ones. It's also a chance to refresh your fire extinguishers! See the COPE article on page 4.)



Current FMA Leadership

Trustees:

Donita Proctor 2017-2021: 431-8789, donitaproctor@gmail.com
Pat Abercrombie 2017-2021: patabercrombie@comcast.net, 473-8217
Al Pucci 2014-2020: apucci@gmail.com
Ken Hite 2016-2020: kenhite@comcast.net, (415) 516-2702

Officers:

Rebecca Goodsell, V-P/Acting President 2017-2019: rebeccagoodsell@gmail.com, 707 473-8479
Dana Eaton, Secretary 2016-2018: dana@eatonstudios.com, 433-4630
Marty Silge, Treasurer 2016-2018: martinsilge@yahoo.com, 431-0814

Volunteer Leaders:

Committee Chairs

COPE: Priscilla Abercrombie, pdanp@comcast.net; and Ginger Hobart, ginger@sonic.net
Del Rio Woods: Pat Abercrombie, patabercrombie@comcast.net
Fire Prevention: Ken Hite, kenhite@comcast.net
Fitch Mountain Preserve: (Temp.) Dave Henderson, davehen@sonic.net
Fitch Mountain Water District: Donita Proctor, donitaproctor@gmail.com; and Pat Abercrombie, patabercrombie@comcast.net
Fun and Appreciation: Kathryn Henderson, fmafunappreciationkathryn17@gmail.com
Road Safety: Tracy Logan, TrLoganImmordino@gmail.com; and Gerda Engelbart, gerda.engelbart@gmail.com
The Septicians (Wastewater): (Temp.) Dave Henderson, davehen@sonic.net

Communications:

Newsletter Editor: Ellen Silge, ellensilge@yahoo.com
Webmaster: Chuck Eaton, info@FitchMtn.org

[For a special tribute to a former FMA Trustee, see Donita Proctor's "Remembrances of Penelope" on page 10.]

(Acting) President's Message

Dear All,

You are probably wondering, who is this person addressing us? Why isn't this from Dave Henderson?

Well. Folks, here is the answer. Dave chose, at the April 8, 2018, Trustees and Officers meeting, to resign as President of the Fitch Mountain Association. We were all surprised, shocked, and saddened by his sudden decision.

Dave had been President for two terms, beginning in 2014, and prior to that he had served as Treasurer. Over the years he worked on many issues and problems affecting our Fitch Mountain community. He worked to improve road safety, septic issues, illegal parking, and, most importantly, working with the City of Healdsburg to ensure that Fitch Mountain would truly be a Preserve. He had deep concerns about fire prevention and safety on the Mountain. He provided vision and energy (a lot of energy, I might add) to these endeavors.

We haven't totally lost him to the siren call of "special projects," as he remains on the Fitch Mountain Preserve Committee and with the Septicians.

Please, when you see him around the Mountain, thank him for his service.

Rebecca L. Goodsell, Acting FMA President

FMA Officer Candidate Statements

President: Pat Abercrombie

I am running for president of the FMA because I believe that there are some areas of common interest for which the Fitch Mountain community benefits from cohesive engagement. Whether we're talking about fire prevention or new, more stringent septic regulations or the condition of our roads, I believe advocating for our interests can best be done through collective collaboration with the agencies that have the resources we need and make the decisions that affect us. I also believe that we are a diverse community that does not move in lock-step so communication, consensus-building and careful action are expected.

Secretary: Dana Eaton

I have served the past two years as FMA Secretary fulfilling the job's requirements – taking notes at the Board meeting, typing up a final report of these notes, keeping an up-to-date list of FMA membership, and keeping computer files and a notebook of these FMA documents. I also introduced my husband, Chuck Eaton, to the FMA board and he is now FMA's volunteer webmaster. I would like to serve one more two-year term before passing the job on to the next FMA secretary.

Treasurer: Martin Silge

I have been serving the FMA as Treasurer since 2014. I would be honored to continue to serve FMA in this capacity.

Today, FMA is a stronger advocate for all residents and property owners of the mountain. It is necessary to account for income & expenditures of the Association for the benefit of FMA members & donors thru proper checks & balances. There are new procedures in place to achieve this.

I'm well qualified to continue to provide the needed support to the operation of FMA, because of my experience. I appreciate YOUR support!!

Respectfully submitted, Marty Silge

Website News — <http://www.FitchMtn.org>

A great new feature has been added to the FMA website. The **Join Us!** button now links to a page where you can choose between getting the pdf for the membership form, which you can send in with a check as before, or you can click to join electronically. After choosing the appropriate **Single** or **Couple** application, you can fill in the needed information on your computer or tablet. When you submit this, you'll be able to choose to pay with either PayPal or a credit card.

Please take advantage of the site to find information about what is going on with the Association. On all pages the FMA logo is at the top left. Click on the logo from any page to return to the **Home** page, **fitchmtn.org**. Hover over the green boxes to see lots of different topics. The pages make heavy use of links to other pages and other websites. These are in beige areas. Many of these links are to pdf documents. Most browsers are configured to display the contents of the pdf documents on your screen. If nothing seems to happen, your browser likely just downloaded the document to your Downloads instead.

The website is only as good as the information that is sent in. Everyone should help! You can do this by email to **info@FitchMtn.org**, the address at the bottom of every page. Please send in: Updates to stale material; Suggestions for corrections of typos or anything that does not seem right; Articles with information for the FMA community; Pictures; Et cetera. As webmaster, I keep busy with keeping the site updated, but I rely on all of you to be the editors.

Yours, Chuck Eaton

FMA Monies and Members

As of June 1st, the FMA's total funds available (to the nearest \$100) were \$7,300, consisting of \$4,600 in restricted funds for fire safety, and \$2,700 in unrestricted. These figures do not include money coming in (at a very good pace!) for Fiscal Year 2018-19.

The paid-up Membership count for 2017-18 was 104, and 30 people have paid for memberships for 2018-2019 already through the easy-to-use, updated FitchMtn.org website!

A note from the Secretary: If your email address has changed, let Dana know at dana@eatonstudios.com so you can stay on the e-blast list.

A Message from COPE (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies)

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the annual meeting. We're all "fired up" about emergency preparedness after the devastating fires last fall. Everyone seems to know someone who lost their home. In fact, some of those folks have moved to Fitch Mountain. The COPE program has a lot to offer Fitch Mountain residents, so please get involved. Here are some opportunities:

- **Fill out and send in your COPE Census form.** The form can be found on the FMA website, and we will have them at the annual meeting.
- **Make sure your gutters and roof are clear of debris** - one of the most critical actions you can do to prevent the loss of your home.
- **Clear a defensible space**, especially the 5 feet closet to your home, but ideally 30 feet. There is a lot of information on the FMA website about fire prevention—check it out!

You will have an opportunity at the annual meeting to purchase or recharge your fire extinguishers. In addition, Petaluma Oxygen will be there to teach you how to properly put out a fire. Do you have an extinguisher next to your BBQ? In the kitchen? Did you know they expire?

Petaluma Oxygen Info:

- New extinguishers: 10 lb \$88, 5 lb (most common) \$58, 2.5 lb \$42
- Refill \$13, or some need to be hydrotested every 12 years (this has a 1.5-week turnaround)
- They will take a check or credit card.

We are trying to make it easy for you to engage in fire prevention. Let us know how we can help.

—*Priscilla Abercrombie, COPE Committee Chair*

Fire Prevention Committee

Ken Hite (Chair), Donita Proctor, and Al Pucci

1. Worked with the County Board of Supervisors to urge the continuance of the Fire Inspection program begun last year. Due to critical shortage of funds at the County caused by post-fire recovery expenditures, budget funds for this year have not been allocated. FMA will continue to advocate for this program and has requested funds in the 2019 budget.
2. Based on concerns voiced by several residents, met with PG&E Vegetation Management to review tree trimming around power lines. PG&E trimmed all trees in the public right-of-way requiring trimming in October just prior to the fires. PG&E regularly trims on an annual basis. Many reported PG&E issues are actually cables belonging to Comcast and AT&T and pose no fire threat.
3. Last fall we began working on a Community Wildfire Prevention Plan. Efforts on this project were interrupted by last fall's fires and post-fire activities. We have again begun working on this; watch for announcements of upcoming meetings.
4. We have arranged for Cal Fire to attend our annual picnic to share lessons learned from last year's fire and making your home the focus of your fire prevention efforts. There are many things you can do to improve the survivability of your home in the event of fire.

Del Rio Woods Advisory Committee

Members: Pat Abercrombie (Chair), Ann Boone, James Brooks, Chris Evans, John Funkhouser, Kathryn Henderson, Susan Steinman, Sarah Walsh

The primary upgrades at Del Rio Woods were completed, and the park reopened the week before Memorial Day. The upgrades include a redesign of the parking lot to reduce fender-benders, new more esthetically pleasing fencing and gates, lots of new landscaping, ADA mitigation of the picnic area, new picnic tables, additional trash receptacles, replacement of the leak-plagued water line under the pavement, new drinking fountains and jug fillers, and new signage. Over the coming months we will be discussing a couple of project segments that were postponed due to funding constraints—namely, the path down from the picnic area to the edge of the grass berm, and replacement of the stairway. In the meantime we will be monitoring the use of and resilience of the new features. If you have questions or concerns, contact PatAbercrombie@comcast.net.

First Summertime Mixer at the “New” Del Rio on June 23rd

FMA will be having its first summer mixer on **Saturday June 23rd** at the re-opened Del Rio Woods Regional Park. We’re going to use those beautiful new picnic benches! Please bring a bottle of wine and an appetizer to share. FMA will provide a table for food; plates, silverware, and glasses; and a large bucket with ice, as well as sparkling waters and sodas.

No need to RSVP—Just show up at 5:00 o’clock that Saturday! (If you have questions, contact Kathryn Henderson at fmafunaappreciationkathryn17@gmail.com.)

“Can I park in the improved Del Rio parking lot for the mixer?”

Sure you can! There’s an easy-to-use pay station for the \$8 fee. Better yet, **purchase a So Co Regional Parks membership and park there as many times as you want for a whole year!** A general membership is \$69, and for seniors it’s \$49—a true bargain for parking at all the parks in the system (including those on the coast), a free night of camping, and discounts from various recreational merchandisers. And you have the feel-good bonus of knowing you’re supporting the parks! Go online to <http://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Become-a-Member/Join-or-Renew>.

Fitch Mountain Preserve Committee

The Fitch Mountain Preserve is slowly developing, with emphasis on the word slowly. Legal ownership passed from LandPaths to the City of Healdsburg last November, but the planned infrastructure construction has been significantly delayed, due to impacts from the October fires in the County and a heavy City staff workload.

Imminent is the formation by the City of a Users Group, which will advise on Preserve policies, monitoring, signage, and other matters. FMA will be a member, along with bicycle and trail groups, and LandPaths.

The Fitch Mountain Fund’s annual fundraiser, always a lot of fun, took place on Sunday, April 22nd at the Villa Chanticleer. FMA members were present and participated in the auction, presided over by the inimitable Senator Mike McGuire. The event raised \$70,000 through advance sponsorships, donations, and auction results.

We invite anyone interested in the future of our beloved Mountain park to help us on the FM Preserve Committee. You’ll be making a significant contribution to our community! Just contact me at davehen@sonic.net.

—Submitted by *Dave Henderson*

An Update from the Septicians

The Fitch Mountain “Septicians” want to update you on the OWTS-TMDL process....

First, those abbreviations/terms: **OWTS** = Onsite Wastewater Treatment System, or the septic system you may or may not have on your property. **TMDL**= Total Daily Maximum Load, or the State Water Board’s determination of what the upper maximum pathogen level should be before the Russian River is considered impaired for recreation purposes.

As you know from past updates and from background info on the FMS website (www.FitchMtn.org), which will soon be updated, later this summer the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board will issue their much-awaited TMDL Study and Action Plan. (The 2015 version was heavily criticized and they have been revising it.)

In the meantime, the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) was to revise its own OWTS Manual, which is supposed to be the guidelines “translating” the State’s TMDL Study directives into practical, nitty-gritty regulations for County property owners. As many of you are aware, that Manual was presented to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on May 22 for approval. The conclusion of an almost 4-hour hearing was the very welcome BOS decision that the Manual in its current form was unsatisfactory, that the process needed to be carried out in a way that was better integrated with the TMDL Study, and that more time and public input were needed. The FMA and the OWTS-Residents of the Russian River (OWTS-RRR) were vocal in lobbying for this outcome. Thanks to those FM residents who spoke, including Ellen Silge, Jacob Martin, and Linda Selover; Dave Henderson and Pat Abercrombie had provided detailed written discussions of pertinent realities and concerns ahead of the hearing. Our Supervisor, James Gore, and Supervisor Lynda Hopkins led these results, and we are grateful to them.

The takeaway was that Supervisors Hopkins and David Rabbitt will lead an ad-hoc group working with PRMD to come up with a Manual that will be more comprehensive (perhaps including more alternative OWTS solutions) and more understanding of the financial and site difficulties of many property owners. On June 10, the OWTS-RRR group gave Supervisor Hopkins a list of the main points made at the hearing that should guide Manual revisions. The Septicians will keep you informed of progress!

Another welcome development is that the County, or rather the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD), has hired an ombudsman to serve as an OWTS resource person and liaison between individual property owners and County agencies during this long and very confusing process. (Your Septicians themselves are often confused, even after 5 years of this!) Ombudsman David Wood is still working out the parameters of his mission, but he represents the Fitch Mountain area as well, so if you have questions about your own current or future OWTS, feel free to contact him: 707.806.4723 and david@goldridgercd.org.

Finally, since we are entering a particularly active phase of the “septic systems saga,” we will be updating you frequently about what is going on. But if you have any particular concerns, please contact one of the following Septicians, probably one of your neighbors:

Dave Henderson (TEMPORARY Chair)	2571 Riverview Dr	davehen@sonic.net
Pat Abercrombie	2255 N. Fitch Mountain Rd	patabercrombie@comcast.net
Al Pucci	2693 N. Fitch Mountain Rd	apuccie@gmail.com
Rick Kolb	2182 S. Fitch Mountain Rd.	richardlkolb@gmail.com
Michael Swicegood		ms@swicegood-civil.com
Jerry Kerr	2023 Redwood Dr.	jejkerr@gmail.com
Jacob Martin	1561 S. Fitch Mountain Rd	getmejacob@yahoo.com

CSA#41-Fitch Mountain: Water Advisory Committee Report

By Donita Proctor and Pat Abercrombie

Our water system is in need of new meters due to unacceptable water losses that have begun to far exceed typical percentages reported in the literature and by the EPA. While two significant leaks were found (the viaduct on S. Fitch Mt. Rd. and under the Del Rio Woods parking lot), additional losses have been attributed to our 27-yr-old residential meters. It is commonly reported in the literature for meters as old as ours to experience as much as 18% loss under low-flow conditions.

Your Advisory Committee asked the Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works (So. Co. TPW) staff to perform a detailed assessment of our FM water losses. In summary, their response was:

1) Our hydrogeologist within the department has been working directly with Russian River Utilities (RRU) with regards to water "loss issues" relative to Fitch Mountain. At this time, both RRU and our geologist are of the belief there is no active large-scale leak resulting in the losses one might interpret from the monthly reports.

2) The way data is collected at the present time is going to result in large variations noting that residential meters are read over multiple days, over different periods of the month, and similarly, the day and time the City reads meters feeding into the community water system also do not always line up with when the individual meters are read.

3) The accuracy of meters is in question for your water system, noting that the majority of active meters are approaching 30 years old. A recent study has indicated that mechanical meters approaching 30 years old may only be reading up to 82% of the flow delivered to residents. In review with RRU, we know meters have been found in various states of disrepair where water has been found to be delivered to residents, yet, it has not been recorded.

4) If this study holds true for your system, we believe it is more likely you are not "losing" water in the traditions sense, but instead are losing revenue based on the non-recording of use.

So. Co. TPW would like to replace Fitch Mountain's old meters with digital "smart" meters that are much more accurate and can be read remotely. Alternative providers of this technology have responded to their Request for Proposals. The project will go to bid soon.

The CSA-41-Fitch financial reserves are built up and will be used to fund this improvement.

Depending on how each household uses water, the new, more-sensitive meters may show an increase in the amount of water used. We may see slight increases in our water bills, as we will now be paying for water that was previously unaccounted for due to faulty meter readings. Bear in mind that our system has been paying for all of the water purchased from Healdsburg, despite not charging system users for unregistered amounts. Water loss equals lost revenue for the system.

We will keep you posted via the Association eblast list as a schedule for the meter replacements become available.

Donita and Pat

Road Safety Committee

Tracy Logan and Gerda Engelbart, Co-Chairs; Al Pucci, Member

Vegetation Trimming N and S Fitch Mountain Road

We thought our Committee had gotten the ball rolling on this Big Ticket Item. However, as Ben Nicholls, CalFire, seemed to also be spearheading it, we're not sure if it was our accomplishment. It had been our understanding from our meeting in March with the Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works (So Co TPW) heads that the County would do an interim trim (which may be the trim that just happened) and then get Fitch Mountain on their maintenance list for a better trim and clean up, timing TBD. Because of the October Fires, there is more competition for such work. I have unsuccessfully tried to clarify this with the County (and CalFire). Some Mountain residents were concerned about vegetation that was cut and left behind, zealous cutting in some places vs other places, etc., but I have not been able to get further answers.

“Gateway” Trimming on N and S FMR by City of Healdsburg

I contacted Jarrod Dericco, City of Healdsburg Public Works, Street and Storm Drain Superintendent. He noted that the recent brush cutting extended into the City limits on the north side. He will schedule the south side for maintenance, but he said no tree cutting services will be done this year, although he has scheduled brush cutting and removal. He will also repaint road markings that were erroneously removed by the paving company on SFMR heading east toward the flashing yellow light.

SLUMP and SLIDE – Per So Co TPW

Ideally, for less disruption for residents and ease of construction, it would be best to do both at the same time. They are planning to keep the road open, at least in the evenings. (Not decided.) It would be best to work in dry-weather times of year. They are looking at a 2-year time frame. They currently have the funding that now leads to the GeoTech reports, which will take 3-4 months. After they are completed, the Engineering Department becomes involved with designs; this usually is about a 6-month process. Then comes construction, after February of the year because of bird and fish impacts. So the date that the actual fixes will begin could be as early as May 2019 in a perfect world, but most likely will be sometime after February 2020. The Slide currently has anti-erosion strategies in place.

Full Depth Reclamation (FDR) of FMR

This is not on the County calendar currently. The Fires have delayed some projects and reordered priorities. A full pave would be best after the Slump and Slide are fixed so the whole road could be done.

Holiday Traffic Letters to CHP and Sheriff

We assisted with editing the letters for 2018, adding speeding as a concern, along with increased traffic and illegal parking (leading to blocked roads and loss of emergency vehicle access/egress.)

—Tracy Logan

"Fitch Afire!" (Excerpts from the *Press Democrat* July 27, 1916)

(With thanks to our official historian, Donita Proctor, for the research)

FITCH MOUNTAIN. The picturesque peak that overlooks Healdsburg and the Russian River Valley near that city was a seething mass of flames on Wednesday night. Fanned by a driving north wind, the flames were being scattered in all directions and at midnight were burning toward Fitch Mountain Tavern and the colony of picturesque summer homes. So fearful were the people occupying the summer homes that the fire would reach them that they departed. Many of them went to Healdsburg to the hotels. Such was the word sent to the *Press Democrat* over the long-distance phone from Healdsburg at the hour mentioned. The outlook seemed extremely serious for the saving of the homes.

HEALDSBURG SENDS FIREFIGHTERS. About 9 o'clock the flames shot up over the crest of the mountain, coming from the direction of "The Frenchman's," as the resort on the top of the mountain is known. An alarm was given in Healdsburg and in a short time 25 or 30 automobile loads of men had left Healdsburg to fight the onrushing flames. Later more and more went, until it was estimated that 60 automobiles had gone to the mountain from the town and the neighborhood. One auto truck from Healdsburg rushed 37 men to the mountain shortly before 11 o'clock.

PEOPLE RUSH FROM BALLROOM. A masquerade ball was in progress in the pavilion on the Russian River at Healdsburg, and the dancers hastily left the dance and went to the scene of the conflagration to do what they could. From Healdsburg and the surrounding country the flames racing hither and thither on the mountainside were a sight that was spectacular in the extreme.

VON TILLOW RACES TO SCENE. W.W. Von Tillow, manager of the Sunset Telephone Company, who has a summer home on Fitch Mountain, left Santa Rosa at half past 11 o'clock for the scene. Mrs. Von Tillow and children were occupying the cottage, and while there was no immediate danger, Mr. Von Tillow resolved to take no chances and started out from here in his automobile. Many people rang up the *Press Democrat* office to inquire concerning the progress of the fire, some of the messages coming from outlying points. Naturally, during the progress of any forest fire, the real conditions are exaggerated during the excitement, but all reports agreed that this was the worst conflagration Fitch Mountain had experienced and that much of its picturesqueness was being destroyed. At 2 o'clock Thursday morning Von Tillow telephoned the *Press Democrat* from his summer cottage, some distance from the fire on Fitch Mountain, that a desperate fight was being waged by the firefighters and that it was hoped they would be able to stem the onrush of the flames before they reached the summer homes and Fitch Mountain Tavern. He said it was an immense fire. At the time he sent word, the fire was burning on the west side, toward Healdsburg. Former mayor Joseph McMinn, Guy Rose, Fred Cummings, W.W. Von Tillow and others were each in charge of firefighters attacking the flames from different angles in the effort to control the massive front.

Fred Bobbitt, of the Hotel Plaza in Healdsburg, directly he noticed the flames on the top of the mountain, phoned here and there and gave the alarm to people owning cottages and resorts. Jack Forsyth, the well-known local liveryman, and Bert Walden, the garage man of this city, motored to Fitch Mountain Tavern when word of the fire reached them. They left at midnight and stated that while the fire was still burning fiercely, it was hoped the fighters would be able to save Fitch Mountain Tavern and the cottages. The guests had departed from the tavern and suitcases and belongings were stacked up in a number of cottages.

Note: A later article reported the fire was out by 2 a.m. and no damage was done to the tavern or summer homes.



Penelope La Montagne

Trustee FMA 2005-2011
Director Del Rio Woods Recreation and Park District 2008-2012

Remembrances of Penelope

By Donita Proctor

Disbelief still strikes me. Reality returns with a start, and I remind myself she is no longer next door.

This picture of Penelope reminds me of the loss of a neighbor and long-time friend. I look toward her home and listen in the evenings, expecting to hear peals of laughter or her voice coming from her precious garden. Spring and summer evenings would find her emerging out of the water from behind the willows after her evening swim. She swam daily in her beloved river, and in inclement weather at Park Point. Her home was adorned with mermaids. She had an affinity with water and its creatures, whether it was swimming with river otters here or dolphins in the Sea of Cortez, Baja. At times she was removing the *Arundo donax* on the beach behind her house or cleaning *Ludwigia* out of the river. Her active cleaning, clearing of the beach and river were as natural to her as household chores.

We sometimes had moments of tension when an errant chicken got in her garden, or my grandson's music was too loud. However, as caring neighbors we each looked after one another when sickness, heartbreak, or trauma occurred. Offerings of soup were exchanged as well as willingness to pick up meds. My last contact with her was an email telling her I was bringing soup. She responded that she had "a very dramatic 24-hour flu" and was now back at work. The next morning I was told she had died in the night.

Her concern and love for neighbors extended to all those in the neighborhood, be it in personal relationships or organizational involvement. When Ralph Nelson, a long-time officer of the Fitch Mountain Association and Director of the Del Rio Woods Recreation Park and District, died, it was Penelope who organized a potluck memorial at the Del Rio Woods picnic ground. This old-fashioned sharing of grief, a meal and stories about Ralph was healing and reminiscent of an era past.

She loved the community and its people. She became the "resident realtor" for the mountain and knew its strengths and weaknesses just like the old houses on the hill and riverside. I think her love of the mountain and river in and of itself made her its champion and drove her activism.

She felt the spirit of the mountain and river with a shaman-like ability. In "high water" years she would intuit whether or not our adjoining properties would flood. We both checked the Russian River flood projections and cresting times online. With email and phone calls there was constant communication. There were times when she felt it would not happen despite warnings, and by golly she was right.

[Continued on next page]

[“Remembrances of Penelope” continued]

During the devastating fires of October, she wrote this after the evacuation advisory: **“I couldn’t leave my house, just yet, and, unlike thousands of others, I felt I had a choice about that. My little house needed my energy and vice versa.”**

As Poet Laureate her skill as a writer was unsurpassed. Those lovely poems, many of which centered on life along the river, were generously shared in the association newsletter. Her talent as a wordsmith was just magical. The poems evoked strong emotion and a spiritual connection from those who read them. After I learned that she had passed, I took out her book *River Shoes* and read the poems over and over again. It was something tangible to hold dear and keep her near.

On Facebook the tributes to her poured out along with descriptions of her enduring qualities and spiritual essence from people who were work partners or clients, book group friends, literary guild members, neighbors, family. I looked forward to hearing their stories and sharing at her own memorial in May.

I wrote her a poem once, “My Lucky Penny”—a ballsy move to give it to a Poet Laureate. It moved her to tears when I told her how much she meant to me. And how when my time came, I hoped she would help plan a neighborhood memorial. I trust she knew just how much she meant to all of us.

You Raise Me UP: Josh Groban

When I am down, and, oh my soul, so weary
When troubles come, and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence
Until you come and sit awhile with me.
I will forever sense your energy and presence here.

Love, Donita