



Nicasio Historical Society Summer Update 2017

Two Upcoming Events

Slide Show, Talk and Take a Hike



Sir Francis Drake

Edward Von der Porten, foremost authority on Sir Francis Drake's 1579 landfall in Marin, will present a slideshow and talk on the subject, after which he will lead a hike to the National Historic Landmark at Drake's Cove on Saturday September 16, 2017.

We will convene in the Bear Valley Visitors' Center Theater at 11am for Mr. Von der Porten's hour-long presentation, after which guests will drive to Drake's Beach for a picnic lunch and 1.24 mile hike at low tide with Mr. Von der Porten to the site of his encampment and the National Historic Landmark.

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The Golden Hind

Glimpses of Nicasio: Secret Places, Private Lands

A Fine Art Exhibition and Sale to Benefit the Nicasio Historical Society



Have you seen them yet? - - The plein air artists, toting umbrellas and easels into Nicasio's public and private places?

These artists have been granted access to private Nicasio parcels with unique vistas to produce paintings and photographs for our art show, *Glimpses of Nicasio: Secret Places, Private Lands*, to be held in Druids' Hall, Friday October 13 through Sunday October 15, 2017.

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*Also in this edition find information on our upcoming **Museum Exhibit in Honor of St. Mary's 150th Anniversary** and*



*An Interview with International Dog Show Judge **Pat Farley Putman**, who spent weekends and summers in Nicasio between 1953 and 1960 working at **Wensom Kennels (now Rock Acre Ranch).***



Slide Show, Talk and Take a Hike

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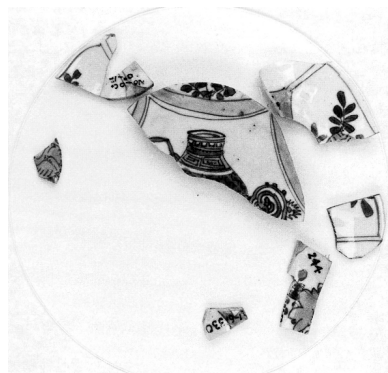


Edward Von der Porten is truly a modern-day renaissance man. As nautical historian and archeologist, he

researched maritime subjects including pre-Viking through eighteenth-century shipbuilding, Henry VIII's *Mary Rose* and the development of the big-gun warship, Francis Drake's California encampment, early Manila galleon wrecks, early Chinese trade porcelains, the World War II German Navy, and World War II Home Front artifacts. He has also served as Consultant to the National Geographic Society on nautical archaeology.

His publications include a book on the German Navy in two versions and fourteen editions, an article on the Hanseatic League in *National Geographic* magazine, a small book on Drake in California, numerous technical reports and magazine and newspaper articles on maritime, archaeological, and ship-modeling subjects, and three small text books, one of which is in its fifth edition and thirty-ninth year of publication.

In addition, Mr. Von der Porten taught high school and junior college for 29 years after which he served as Director of the Treasure Island Museum (Navy / Marine Corps / Coast Guard) for seven years.



Chinese porcelain shards found in a Miwok village from a bowl brought by Drake

This Drake scholar explained, "Our sixty-eight-year search for evidence of Francis Drake's *Nova Albion* identified Drake's Cove in the Point Reyes National Seashore as the site of his harbor and encampment. Research into ship construction, seamanship, navigation, cartography, botany, zoology, hydrography, meteorology, anthropology, and archaeology by a wide range of scholars contributes to the story.

"Analysis of Ming porcelain shards found in Coast Miwok Native-American village sites provides physical clues which complete the evidence for the site and for Drake's activities there. Drake's Cove now is part of a sixteenth-century National Historic Landmark district, the highest designation of an historic site by the National Park Service."

Historian, author and NHS Director Dewey Livingston considers Edward Von der Porten a genius!

If you would like to join us for this unique opportunity, mail a check for \$10 payable to NHS and for "DRAKE" to

Nicasio Historical Society

P O Box 111

Nicasio, CA 94946

(Limited to the first 30 people who reserve.)



Gordon Miller's Oil painting depicts the Golden Hind careened in Drakes Estero

***Glimpse of Nicasio:
Secret Places, Private Lands***

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Twenty-three established Marin artists are participating in this event, including our own Thomas Wood and Jane Mothersill as well as Pt Reyes photographer Marty Knapp. The artwork will be displayed in Druid's Hall.



This fine art exhibition and sale, a benefit for the Nicasio Historical Society, will open with a festive evening on Friday October 13 from 5:00pm to 8:00pm. Wine and savories will be served while you meet and chat with the artists and view



their work. The art show continues on Saturday and Sunday October 14 and 15 from 11:00am to 5:00pm with all artists present to discuss their artwork with you. In addition, on each of the three days of the exhibition, one or more paintings will be on silent auction by their respective artists.



There will also be a raffle with an assortment of prizes from local vendors and possibly a painting too. **You will receive your invitation and raffle tickets by mail in mid September.** Raffle winners will be selected prior to the event and will be contacted. You need not be present at the event to win.

We hope you will all join us for this festive weekend at Druids' Hall and help us make this Nicasio Historical Society Art Show become an enjoyable annual Nicasio cultural event.

Interview with Pat Putman

By Elaine Doss on June 15, 2017

At the home of Ava Jean Brunbaum

**Also present: Ava Jean, Ed Putman, and
Laurie Knowles**

Pat Putman (néé Patricia Anna Farley) was born in 1942 to Jack Albert Farley and Leola M. Mitchell. Pat's father was born and raised on a dairy farm in Oregon. As yet, there is no known connection between Pat's Farley family and the Farleys of Nicasio.

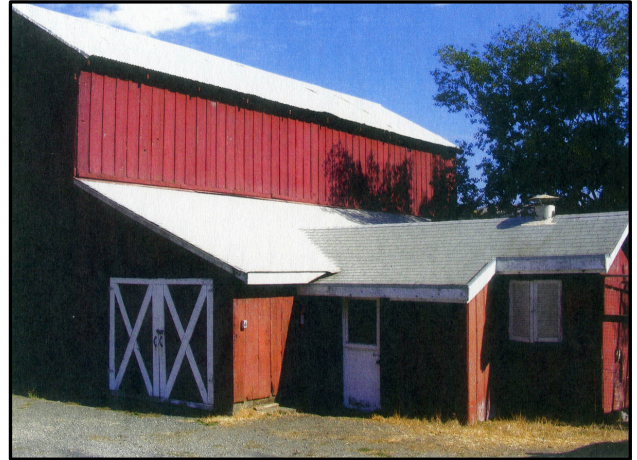
Between 1953 and 1960, Pat was often at the Nicasio home (now Ava Jean's house) of Hon. Mark Watson who established Wensum Kennels to breed and raise show dogs in the old dairy barn on his Nicasio property. Pat thinks that Mark Watson must have built this house, since Ava Jean heard upon purchase that it had been built in 1951, which was around the time Mark came to Nicasio, and due to certain design features suited to dogs, among which are the Dutch doors from kitchen to outside. It is situated on a knoll with a cottage down the driveway near the old dairy barn.



The Cottage (photo 2012)

Mark Watson's main goal was to reestablish the Iceland Sheepdog before it became extinct. He imported eight genetically pure dogs from Iceland, four

males and four females in order to save the breed from extinction right here in Nicasio. He also raised Norwich terriers for the hunt.

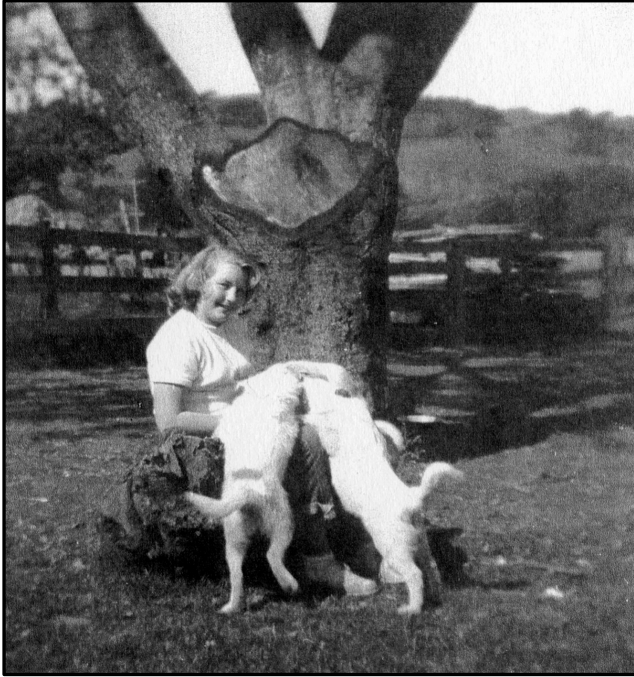


***Portion of the dairy barn/kennel
with added whelping room (photo 2012)***

Mark installed a dozen or so individual dog kennels in the old dairy barn, each with concrete floor and flush toilet set into and level with the floor. It also had a full, modern (1950s) kitchen with dishwasher for sterilizing the large ceramic feeding bowls. In the refrigerator, there were always cottage cheese cartons, packages of horsemeat, kibble and Friskies biscuits. Neighbor Joe Dentoni took care of all repairs at the kennels.

When eleven-year old Pat Farley first came to Nicasio in 1953, she lived with her mother in San Francisco at 211 Maple Street. Her father had died at the age of 49 when Pat was eight years old. Living across the street from Pat and her mother was Mona Kerch, Glen Kerch's mother. One day, Mona invited them to lunch. Pat was a clever, industrious and adventurous child and Mona, who had been watching her outdoors at play, invited Pat to go with her to Nicasio to assist her in her new duties as caretaker of Wensum Kennels. Pat liked both the sound of the name,

Nicasio, and the idea that it had something to do with dogs. Mona was moving out of San Francisco and into Mark Watson's cottage. It was arranged that young Pat would stay there with Mona on weekends and during summers.



***Pat at Wensum Kennels in May 1956
with Goli and Gryla***

Pat traveled by bus from South San Francisco to Fairfax, where Mona would pick her up and later drop her back off. Pat recalled that she regularly got car sick and puked out the window and down the side of Mona's car on that ride. Pat would wash off the car door each time upon arrival in Nicasio before tending to many of the dog-related chores for Mona. A very enjoyable chore was taking the dogs out on a daily walkabout. Mark regularly questioned her afterwards on the dogs' reactions, especially the sheepdogs.

Mark was British royalty and his home was extremely well appointed. High Tea was always in the Blue Room with its stately antique furniture, delicate porcelain figures among many other beautiful treasures, and

the important personages who visited, the discussions, the writing of *Iceland Dog*, the book he was working on, and more. Mark schooled Pat in good manners and gracious comportment to attend High Tea, like how to sit gracefully perched on the edge of a chair one foot positioned slightly behind the other, delicately sipping tea and gingerly nibbling on snacks. "I think Mark was trying to civilize me," she laughed.

He was an unofficial ambassador and was called on to host various VIPs in his home or state dinners in San Francisco. Performers from the San Francisco Opera House and elsewhere visited him in Nicasio. Pat recalled Flamenco dancers visiting and performing their dance in his home. Mark also had a home in Boston.

Mark showed his dogs at the Golden Gate Kennel Club. These were all-day events. By assisting Mark at these shows, Pat learned how to handle all facets of preparing and showing dogs. Mark's dogs invariably won. He even prepared an exhibit on the Icelandic Sheepdog for the Seattle World's Fair (1962).



One of Mark's Icelandic Horses

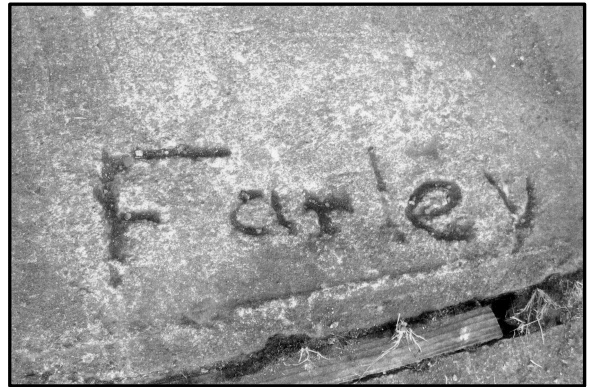
Mark imported Icelandic horses for his riding pleasure. They have a fast trot gait called *tolt*, which affords the rider a very

smooth ride. There was a fenced enclosure for the horses between the cottage and the road. Pat rode these horses bareback and without bridle, halter, or reins. Each time she saw Mark's Porsche coming up the road, she'd jump on an Icelandic horse, gallop to the beginning of his driveway and get the horse to wait in order to race Mark back to the compound. Each time at the finish line, Mark voiced some disapproval, but never disallowed it; Pat could tell that he actually enjoyed it too.

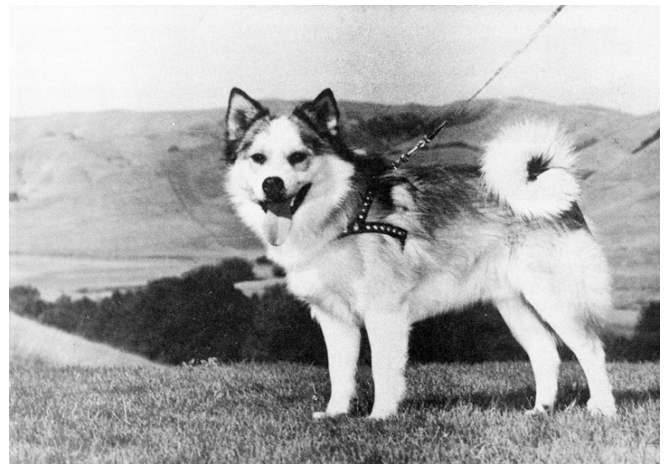


The "Racetrack"

Mark enjoyed riding his horses in the hunt on his property. After each ride he would clean his tack in the tack room and wash the horses on the cement pad he had put there for that purpose. In 1955-56 Pat wrote her name in the wet cement of the horse wash stall back of the barn. Her name, Farley, and her handprints remain to this day in the cement.



In addition to her duties with the dogs, Pat worked with Mark on his book describing his Icelandic Sheepdog breeding program at Wensom Kennels. It was a self-published book and although she had had several copies, after many moves, she had lost them all. Recently she located a copy through a rare book detective.



*Konni Lindarbakki
A Photo from Mark's Book Taken at
Wensom Kennels in Nicasio*

When Pat graduated from high school, Mark was very ill. He wanted to go back to Iceland to die. She thinks that he probably had planned to have her educated as a veterinarian. Due to his illness, however, Mark left for Boston, then on to England, before his planned return to Iceland. Sadly, he never made it back to Iceland; he died while still in England. When Mark left Nicasio, his horses went to Pt. Reyes veterinarian Dr. Griffith.



***Mona Kerch, Caretaker
of Wensum Kennels***

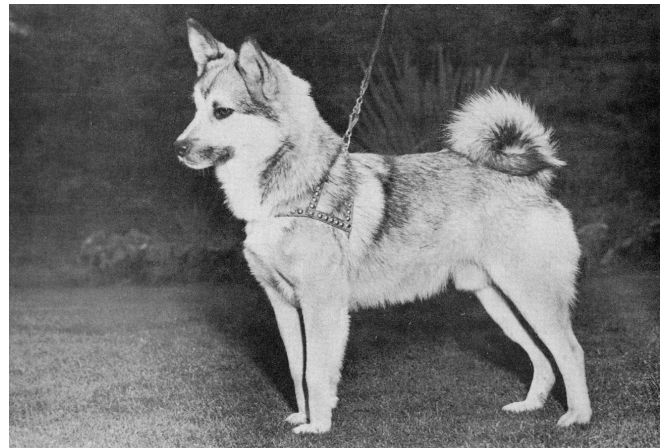
Having lived and worked with Mona Kerch for nearly a decade, Pat heard many of Mona's wonderful stories and fond memories of her prior life in vaudeville. Married with four children, Mona and her husband performed a vaudeville act during the 1920s and 1930s in which he passed electricity through her body, making her hair stand straight up. At first business was good, but with the onset of the Great Depression, it could no longer be depended on to support the family. Mona then became a nurse in psychiatric hospitals, until finally she felt she couldn't continue due to threats on her life by psychiatric patients.

That's when she decided to avail herself of the opportunity to move out of the city and become Mark Watson's assistant in Nicasio at Wensum Kennels. At about that same time, her son, Glen Kerch, had become co-owner with Nick Kobseff of the Nicasio Ranch House property, which included the restaurant, post office, small

store and town square. He resided in Nicasio with his family in a home adjacent to the Ranch House

Due to his breeding program and the book he wrote describing it, Mark Watson saved the Icelandic Sheepdog from extinction and established its gene pool. Recently, Iceland designated an official annual holiday in Mark's honor for his life-long love of and generosity toward Iceland. Mark had also created a dog hospital and museum in Iceland.

Due to her experience in Nicasio at Wensum Kennels, Pat became an International Dog Show judge. She is considered "grandmamma" to the Icelandic Sheepdog, saved from extinction by the activities of Mark Watson. She has been asked to be the keynote speaker to "show and tell" her experiences in Nicasio with Mark Watson regarding the development of the program he established both here and in Iceland at Iceland's first U.S. meeting to be held this October in Washington State.



***Vaskur of Thorvaldsstodir
Wensum Kennels, Nicasio, CA***

We are grateful to Pat Putman for sharing with us a valuable part of Nicasio history, previously unknown to us.



Mary Elizabeth Lafranchi (1929 - 2017)

“Mary Lafranchi passed away peacefully surrounded by her family and caregivers on August 12, 2017. She was the loving mother to her six children, Randy, Rick (Debby), Jan Reilly (Kevin), Scott (Karen), Diane Deterding (Pete), Kim Suida (Joe), 12 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren. She is also survived by her best friend of over 68 years, Grace Farley.



“She was born Mary Elizabeth Hall on October 7, 1929 to George and Bessie Hall, the youngest of four children. She grew up on the family farm and graduated from Petaluma High School in 1947. She met her husband, Will, while dancing at the Cotati dances. They settled on the Lafranchi Ranch in Nicasio, where she lived for the rest of her life. Mary was an active member of the Nicasio community, volunteering for the mother's club, 4-H, Ladies Auxiliary, Nicasio Historical Society and St. Mary's Church. Always the generous hostess, Mary was never happier than when she was entertaining a houseful of people. She loved gardening, baking, holidays, helping others and attending her children's and grandchildren's sporting events and performances. Even though mom was busy raising her six children, she always had room for more at her table and her home.”

Obit by Marin I J