



## *President's Message*

Miriam and I have just come back from nearly a month in Vietnam and Cambodia. For me it was an only semi-welcome reminder of another tour in that part of the world many years ago.

Of course we saw lots of changes, but not nearly as many as anticipated. The old mustard colored French buildings are still there, though gussied up for the tourist trade. Indeed, the French themselves are back, both as tourists (far outnumbering the Americans), and as resident investors. City traffic is as raucous and dangerous as I remembered. There are perhaps two (maybe three) stoplights in all of Saigon, and they are entirely ignored by the crush of cycles, motos, bicycles, cars, and trucks which clog every intersection. Whether drivers or pedestrians, each Vietnamese goes into combat mode as soon he hits the street. The point is to gain ground, millimeter by millimeter. You nudge the vehicles in front, edge aside those coming from other points on the compass, and you keep pedestrians in mortal fear by constant honks and shouts. When I was there in the 60's traffic accidents were the largest single cause of death in the city. That is still the case.

The culture is still quintessentially capitalist. After a brief attempt in the '90's to make everyone a marxist, the government took an easier course, and reverted to the prior model: publicly subsidized education now ends with grammar school, health care is back in the private sector. On the business side, anything goes, provided you can pay for it, and nothing happens without greasing appropriate palms. Other land use regulations appear non-existent.

Not even the potholes have changed: where I tripped on loose sidewalk tiles in 1967, I tripped again in 2009.

So I came back frazzled and a little disillusioned. But all felt right when we opened the curtains to our view of Tomales Bay, drenched in sunshine after multiple days of welcome, way-overdue rain. Thanks to the opening of the dikes on the Giacomini property, the

Bay seemed much bigger, and the birds more numerous. The hills were that soft green which long about Saint Patrick's Day give Ireland herself a run for the money.

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## *It's Dues Time Again*

Those of you able to come in January to the annual meeting and potluck at Alan and Sydne Bortel's know how informative, and just plain enjoyable meeting with your neighbors can be.

It's time to re-up: for just twenty five dollars per year per family you too can become a fully contributing part of the neighborhood. Since so many of us donate time and materials to IRA projects we have not for many years had to raise our dues, but have, if anything, increased the scope of our activity. Your money goes to fund things like two way radios for our volunteer disaster coordinators, like the disposal of those dead tanoaks and live oaks, and the adopt-a trail program which helps keep and improve our links with the national seashore.

You will find enclosed, addressed envelopes. Please take the time to put your check inside that envelope and return it to Alicia Jackson at the indicated PO Box. While on the subject, we do want to thank Russ Ridge, who is leaving the Treasurer's job after multiple years of service. Russ claims to know where every penny went, and pending a wide ranging internal investigation, we will take him at his word.

