

THE PANHANDLER

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Biology Class Swims With The Sharks

By Iain Salazar

Last August the Baja California Field Studies Program had a rare and unique opportunity to swim with one of the most dramatic fish in the sea - The Whale Shark. The creature is the largest fish in the ocean and can grow more than 50 feet in length and weigh several tons. Yet not every class gets their chance to swim with these modern day Leviathans.

"We see Whale Sharks almost every year," said Columbia Biology Instructor Guy Van Cleave, "but been able to get multiple students in the water with whale sharks on only two other occasions. A couple of times a student was able to stick his/her head in the water with a mask or jump in, but the shark swam off."

For the last 21 years Van Cleave has been bringing students to Bahia De Los Angeles, a fishing town 350 miles south of the U.S. border, to study the wildlife in the Gulf of California. The two week class - known as The Baja California Field Studies Program, is taught through a series of informal lectures and excursions among the neighboring islands in Bahia de los Angeles.

Van Cleave teaches the class alongside fellow biologist and Santa Cruz resident Greg Meyer - "It's similar to being on a Safari in the Serengeti" said Meyer. "There is an incredible amount of diversity and wildlife." Meyer considers swimming alongside whale sharks as the "Holy Grail" of the program.

Though the docile sharks are filter feeders and harmless to man, students can still have reservations, according to Van Cleave - "If asked about their intentions in event of

an encounter I think most students would say that they plan to stay in the boat. But when primed with stories of past whale shark adventures and presented with the matter of fact attitude (of course you are going to get in) and the enthusiasm of the instructors, students get caught up in the moment and find themselves in

the water with the world's largest fish before they realize what they are doing."

For over two decades Van Cleave has witnessed his students reactions - "You have students that have recently spent two-and-a-half grueling days of travel and then find themselves in a magical spot with feelings alternating between ecstasy and physical discomfort." said Van Cleave, "At home we are insulated from life and its cycles."

"Students are exposed to wildlife up-close and personal and they share the sun, the moon, the tides, the breezes and it's exhilarating. Students appreciate that to swim with a whale shark is probably a once in a lifetime opportunity. There's group identity also - they get to share it with like-minded people."

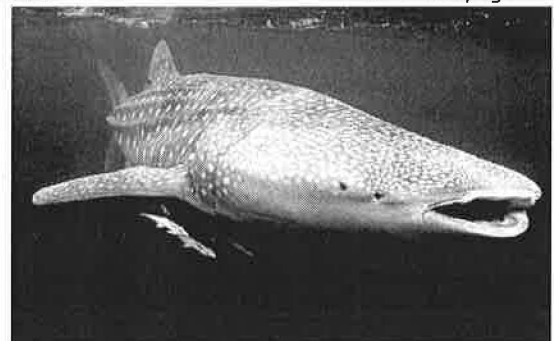
One of these like minded people is Wendi Hudson, a student who will be entering the nursing program at Columbia. She participated in the program last August. "I was so proud of myself for getting in the water with the sharks. This was my first time snorkeling and it was just scary to jump into this huge ocean with this beast that's like 10 times bigger than me, I just kept telling myself - "You can do this, you can do this."

Though Van Cleave has been traveling to Bahia de Los Angeles for over 30 years, his first experience swimming with whale sharks is fairly recent. "About four years ago we found five very mellow animals in glass-smooth water in front of El Rincon. I had every student in the water. As a good watchful captain I stayed in the boat to keep my eye on things when it occurred to me that I had never swum with a whale shark and this might be my last chance.

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Whale Shark Photo: Peter Nicholas

Ambitious Group of Dedicated Students Take on the Position and Tasks of Senate

By Jordan Geary

After years of no student representation on many of Columbia College's committees, students have picked up the slack and filled in the gaps.

The two-year gap in student representation has closed after a Student Senate meeting Sept 11. It was 8:30 a.m. when Columbia College Student Body President Jayme Johnson walked in to Manzanita 15, the room known to students as the Student Center. She was walking into the Associated Students of Columbia College (ASCC) Senate meeting; the first of 15 official meetings for the 2007 fall semester. Alongside President Johnson was Senate Advisor Doralyn Foletti.

The two were prepared for the meeting ahead, but had no idea what they were walking into. First on the agenda was a "call to order," then a "roll call" of the attendees.



Senate Advisor Doralyn Foletti & Senate President Jayme Johnson

Soon Advisor Doralyn Foletti took the stage, where she began to discuss, at the student's request, all of the college's committees. Without delay students were saying, I'd like to do that. "It was exciting," exclaimed Johnson.

What was the end result? As Johnson put it, "It was amazing because some of the committees haven't had people to sit on them for the past two years, and now, we [have] students to chair and sit on every committee."

Johnson sits on multiple committees herself. One that she gets the opportunity to represent Columbia College is the Board of Trustees Committee, which meets Wednesdays at 5 p.m. in Modesto to discuss matters regarding, both Modesto Jr. College and Columbia College members of the Yosemite Community College District.

With eight committees having someone sit or chair every one of them was "amazing" exclaimed Johnson. When asked how she felt about everyone in the student senate Johnson replied, "We have a really good group of dedicated students and the ones who aren't dedicated are fading out very fast. I'm not too worried about it because I think we'll have other people [to] take their position."

The next Senate meeting is open to any student and set for 8:15 a.m. Oct 17 in the Student Center, Manzanita 15. 🌻

LIBRARY'S ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE SAVED FROM BECOMING HISTORY

By Iain Salazar

Sheriff Miller Sardella has long since passed away, but his voice can still be heard lamenting "the good old days" from a cassette recorded in 1974 - "Give me 30 or 40 years ago - that's when I liked Tuolumne County - they had the gamblin,' they had the prostitution, this was a REAL country."

Vernon Reid settled in Sonora in 1912. He was a projectionist for a silent movie theater. He was a reporter for the Modesto Bee. But he was also a man who had to endure the prejudices of a small town. You can hear his experiences on the tape entitled "Vernon Reid, A Negro in Sonora."

Or can you?

According to Librarian Brian Greene, the Oral History tapes at Columbia College have begun to deteriorate. "These tapes are over 40 years old" said Greene,

"Just yesterday I had two tapes break when I tried to play them - for some of these interviews there exists only one copy," Greene said.

The Oral History Series was initiated more than 25 years ago by Columbia College history teacher Dick Dyer. Dyer came to teach at Columbia when the college first opened in 1968. From the early 70's to the early 80's Dyer and his students conducted interviews with local residents retelling what early life was like in Tuolumne and Calaveras counties.

There are over 160 tapes in the collection, containing interviews with cowboys, ministers, loggers, miners and "old timers." When Dyer retired several years ago, the Oral History program retired as well, much to the dismay of library media tech Shelley Muniz - "I really wish someone was still doing these, because the information is invaluable."

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Unfortunately for Muniz, Oral History is no longer taught at Columbia; but efforts are being made to preserve and make accessible the hundreds of hours of Gold Country history caught on tape.

Thanks to a grant from the Don Brady Foundation, the library is now able to digitize the cassettes that comprise the collection. With the help of the grant, Muniz, and librarians Larry Steuben and Brian Greene, the existing collection will be preserved in a format that does not erode - the MP3.

CD's will replace the cassettes, making the interviews much more accessible to students - "I think many of the students have never needed or owned a cassette player," says Greene. Many of the interviews will also be available online for streaming and download. Steuben hopes that one day the interviews can be transcribed and included with the CD's as a supplement.

The Library needs help with this time-consuming process. Interested students should contact Greene in the Library. 🐾

Columbia's Women's Volleyball Team Encourages Community Participation

By Rebecca Keese

As summer comes to an end, another fall semester begins at Columbia College and the campus begins to flood with new and returning students. However, for the Columbia College's women's volleyball team, the routine of classes and practice is already fully underway as they begin this year's sports season.

Columbia's Women's Volleyball team began this year's season by hosting a two-week-long volleyball day camp for elementary, junior high and high school girls. The day camp, held at the campus, focused on the fundamental techniques of volleyball with an emphasis on developing "teamwork" in all participating ages. Not only did the volleyball day camp bring out the competitiveness in the participating girls, it also sparked the competitive fire in this year's Columbia team members assisting with the day camp.

With two pre-season games, and three pre-season tournaments under their belts, volleyball team members find themselves training several hours a day, sharpening their personal skills and strengthening the teams' unity. Sarah Moyan, a team freshman said, "We all share a love for the game. We just love to play!"

So What is the Student Senate Anyway?

By Jordan Geary

Without the Student Senate there would be no clubs, no college Halloween parties, and no student representation.

The student government is a group of students who see to the "furtherance of student welfare," day-in and day-out, according to the Associated Students of Columbia College (ASCC) Constitution.

The student government was formed, according to the Constitution and Bylaws which took effect June 11, 2001, to "direct extracurricular activities and student government at Columbia College."

The ASCC's affairs are conducted by the "Inter-Club Council, Student Senate, and Executive Council." Combined the three parts of the student government represent both; the students of the college and all campus clubs.

With three official meetings so far this semester, the Student Senate has been working on moving multiple "activity request" forms through the veins of the college's administrative body. One such form that is currently underway, in the process of being approved or disapproved, is a student Halloween party, said by Johnson to express congratulations to students for making it through their first weeks of school as well as celebrate traditional Halloween activities. "If accepted the Halloween Festival will be held Oct 31," said Johnson with a smile.

While many students get involved in these types of activities, there have been times in the past where events were empty and students just didn't show up, said Johnson.

"Student activities are why I joined the Student Senate," says Johnson as she pulls out a six-page packet titled, "Activity Guidelines." 🐾

Although 1-3 in the season games, this shared passion for the game lead the Claim Jumper Ladies straight to the winners' bracket in the more recent Delta Volleyball Tournament. Angie Crowshaw, a returning sophomore said, "We started off really strong with a big win against San Francisco; a dramatic difference from last year when we matched up against them. The victory over San Francisco put us in the winners' bracket."

Columbia Head coach, Raelene Juarez said, "We've taken awhile to get going, but we're off to a good start." Coach Juarez and assistant coach Jennifer Weller both are looking forward to a successful season and encourage the community and students alike to attend the games and support the team. As an added incentive, Columbia College is providing its students free admission to all athletic events held on campus. 🐾

Personal Profile on Dr. Brian Jensen

From Auto Body Mechanic to Ph.D., One Man's Journey Through the Ringers of Life

By Jordan Geary

About 40 years ago Brian Jensen Ph.D. was living in San Francisco, from childhood to now his path through life has been anything but straight, from automatic transmission mechanic to geography major to a master's in somatic counseling and more. Brian has experienced a great deal of life's curve balls.

In the sixth grade his parents decided to move to Marin County. Here they would raise their family; Brian, his two brothers, and one sister. They kept their auto parts and maintenance store in San Francisco, the very same one Brian would work at, for five years after high school.

Brian came from a family that "didn't value education that much" and he never finished all his classes in high school. After school, he worked at various odd jobs that eventually led him back to the auto industry. While working on cars, Brian received career changing injuries to one of his hands and his back.

The injuries caused him to enroll in community college with hopes of a better job. He was the first in his family to go to college. It's brought us closer together, said Brian.

Throughout community college Brian had counselors who helped him a lot to find his way. "They helped me realize my deficits were actually my strengths," said Brian. This made him realize that he actually had a chance at doing whatever he wanted. And this, says Brian, is just the thing that he strives to do for the students he gets to meet every day.

"All I want to do here is support students to where they want to go," said Brian with a smile. Laughing about the past, Brian talks of the 10 years he spent in community college trying to figure out what interested him enough to get a degree. Finally he decided to get his general-education done and see what opportunities opened. So he stuck to his plan which led him to the California State University, Sacramento where, after a few classes, he decided that geography wasn't for him.

So Brian went back to community college. And in 1993 he found his niche, therapy. He soon transferred to Dominican University in San Rafael where he received his degree in physiology with a minor in religion. Brian decided to keep going for his master's, getting an MA in counseling from Sonoma State and an MA in somatic counseling from the California Institute of Integral Studies. From there Brian went to Southern California Universities for Professional Studies to get his Ph.D.

"When you get clear about what you want to do, the obstacles become part of the path," says Brian. The path is truly what Brian's life has been about. He has had many jobs related to his area of study, "suicide prevention, crises counseling, grief counseling, and



Special Programs Counselor Dr. Brian Jensen

general therapy," said Brian.

It has been two years since Brian started working at Columbia College and he is already in high demand with a month-long waiting list of appointments. Some academics would become boastful in such a situation, but not Dr. Brian Jensen, when asked what to call him he energetically replies "call me Brian" with a smile.

He is an embodiment of long college careers and processes, and through it all he still says "it's not about the degree, it's about the process." 🐼

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"The boats and all people were fine so I picked the largest shark, estimated its direction and swam to a spot about 40 meters away and waited. It was a big animal, the first thing I saw was an open gaw of a mouth that seemed eight feet across."

"The shark turned just enough to miss me and I actually put my hands out in self defense as the entire length passed within 10 inches for what seemed an eternity. When the seven foot caudal fin arrived I assumed the fetal position thinking (and hoping) that I would get knocked around, but to my surprise when the fin contacted me it was withdrawn immediately. I was a dot in the ocean at the right place at the right time.

Another time I kayaked with three sharks in front of the station. That was very cool because the kayaks are so low in the water."

Once the excitement is over and the students return home, Van Cleave hopes his students take back with them more than shark stories and the ability to identify fish - "I hope they take back a humility and reverence for the magnificence and variety of life, and the knowledge that the quality of our lives depends on healthy wild places - There is more to life than i-phones and Beamers." 🐼