

PACIFIC VALLEY SCHOOL

Big Sur Unified School District

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POINT SUR LIGHTHOUSE FIELD TRIP



Above from left: Students admire the view before ascending the spiral staircase to the Lantern Room where the light is in full operation. Students look over the railing of the Lantern Room's outside balcony and down 300 feet at the ocean and craggy rocks below. Docents have many interesting facts to share about the history and artifacts of the lighthouse. The view to south as students venture toward the Head Keepers Quarters

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be at the edge of the world or standing at the bow of a giant ship in the middle of the ocean, like in the movie Titanic? For me, that is what it was like at the top of the Point Sur Lighthouse. Built on a volcanic rock "island" that juts out from the Big Sur "mainland" and rises 370 feet above the surface of the ocean, the Pt. Sur Lighthouse is majestic, awesome and somewhat foreboding.

Aside from the people who actually lived there in the late 1800s and early 1900s, no-one knows the history as well as the volunteer docents who dedicate much of their time and energy preserving the landscape and buildings and sharing the amazing stories that swirl around the lighthouse like fog on a windy day. Pat, Todd and Al, three docents dressed in historical uniforms, greeted our school group and led us through what one teacher calls, "The best field trip he's ever been on." As we were guided up the narrow windy road that skirts the edge of the massive rock and leads to the top, the docents shared many stories and facts about the light station.

The California Gold Rush spurred an increase in shipping and hence numerous shipwrecks at Point Sur which led to the lighthouse's construction in 1886. One of the largest airships ever built, the USS Macon, crashed into the deep Pacific Ocean just south of the lighthouse in 1935. The light station consists of a barn, a blacksmith/carpenter shop, a water tower, the head keeper's house and another family home. A handful of men and women resided there, working and raising families. Six children went to school at the light station starting in 1927. Also mentioned and a favorite topic for PV's students was, of course, the spirits that inhabit the famously "haunted" light station. There are presumed to be eighteen ghosts, one of whom is believed to be a woman who lived at the light station as a child, re-visited it in her later years, passed away one year later and moved back in, so to speak, and now is a resident ghost for years to come.

Life was hard back then. Supplies were brought in by boat every four months and floated to shore in barrels or hoisted up by a pulley system, attached to a railcar, then hauled to the top using a steam-driven donkey engine. Point Sur was considered the most remote and isolated region in California then. During the early 1900s, life on the south coast was equally hard and a similar small school called the Redwood School existed for families raising their children. Pacific Valley School's remote location on the south coast and small student body had docents comparing our school and families to those that lived at the lighthouse back in the day. In 1938 life became easier and less isolated for the north and south coast of Big Sur when Highway 1 was completed. In the 1940s lighthouse families sent their children to a new, bigger school house near Highway 1. Today, on the south coast, Pacific Valley School remains one of the smallest schools in the country.

In the 1960s the United States Coastguard began automating lighthouses. In 1974 the last light keeper left Point Sur. In 1991 the lighthouse became a state historical landmark and in 2004 Point Sur, the light station and the 32 acres that surround it (including the coastal waters), were transferred to the California Department of Parks and Recreation for all to enjoy.

Students & staff were engaged in all aspects of the three-hour Point Sur tour. Afterwards, students wrote letters to the docents thanking them and sharing their favorite moments. Many students enjoyed the light keeper's house and the stories of the children's adventures there. Others enjoyed the Lantern Room where the actual light is located in the light tower and still operates to this day. Others liked being on the Lantern Room's balcony overlooking the vast magnificent ocean, feeling the powerful wind and admiring the views. I was particularly impressed with the resilience and hardiness of the people who worked and resided there, the breathtaking views of Big Sur from high above the ocean, and most importantly the volunteer docents whose dedication, integrity and knowledge were a major part of our unforgettable experience.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SUNDAY 5/8

Mother's Day

THURSDAY 5/12

Egg Drop Contest 1:15 pm

TUESDAY 5/17

Birthday Celebrations

Cake by the ocean!

MONDAY 5/23

BSUSD Board Meeting 4:30pm

LCAP & Budget Adoption

MONDAY 5/30

NO SCHOOL! Memorial day

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Quote of the Month

"We all have our time machines, don't we. Those that take us back are memories...And those that carry us forward, are dreams."

— H.G. Wells.

...STUDENT SPOTLIGHT...



Left: In the spotlight, graduating senior and aspiring doctor, Fiona, is ready for a scholarship interview at UCLA. Right: Fiona and her sister Lily at the entrance of San Diego's Natural History Museum.

We have bragged about her before and this newsletter is no exception. Fiona B., a soon-to-be-graduating senior at Pacific Valley School is worthy of the spotlight. Fiona, has been working hard on college applications and was recently well rewarded. Fiona received acceptance letters from six colleges, UC Berkeley, Cal Poly, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, Pepperdine and UC Los Angeles. An aspiring doctor, Fiona has chosen the college of her dreams, UCLA, and has already begun the admissions process. Not only was she accepted, Fiona will receive several academic scholarships that will help her financially along the way.

Fiona will continue to be PV's Associated Student Body President for just a bit longer. She wrote in her last monthly Student Report, "The unique learning environment that I've experienced while attending Pacific Valley School has contributed to my success." However, she also points out that she had to utilize outside resources for college preparatory guidance and mentorship. When a small rural school has disadvantages, sometimes those disadvantages are an asset when it comes to separating yourself from the pack. In Fiona's case, PV's small and rural status let her stand out in the crowd of applicants. Her ability to overcome the hardships gave her an advantage in the end.

Those of us who know Fiona also know that she is as determined and goal-oriented as they come. She says, "I used to give myself homework when I didn't have any. I would push myself constantly." She also advises students and parents that colleges begin to look at test scores and grades starting in the 7th grade. She has always maintained high test scores and continues to take Advanced Placement courses to boost her educational achievements. She writes, "I hope that my accomplishments will inspire the younger students to strive for higher levels of education..." We look forward to hearing more from Fiona when she gives her graduation speech at PV's Promotions Ceremony this June.

...HIGH SCHOOL FIELD TRIP...

Recently teacher Karen Beecher took PV's high school students on a very educational field trip to Southern California. The field trip was a mini-adventure for three nights and four days. Students stayed in a hotel as well as camped in a beach side campground by night and visited many interesting places during the day. Fiona had this to share about their experiences in her latest Student Report.

"The high school field trip to San Diego was amazing! During our time at UCSD we sat in on a cognitive science lecture, a vector calculus lecture and toured a biochemistry lab, where UCSD researchers are currently using algae oil to make surfboards and wetsuits. Students and faculty members are searching for a way to replace petroleum with a renewable source.

We visited the famed Balboa Park, exploring the Museum of Man, The Natural History Museum, the San Diego Sports Museum of Champions, The San Diego Air and space Museum and the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center. Some interesting things that we learned about were, social equality, California's diverse environment, cellular and molecular biology, the evolution of man over time, and the current hot topics of our time such as, stem cell research and energy conservation. We also learned how ancient warriors shrunk the heads of their enemies in order to make decorative war trophies. The overall field trip was simultaneously fun and intellectually stimulating."

ANNUAL EVENTS

PV'S 5TH ANNUAL HIKE FOR HEALTH, the BSAGE EVENT & the BSIM 3K RUN

Students, staff and families celebrated Earth Day by participating in three annual events that focus on the environment and fitness.

The first event was the Big Sur Advocates for a Green Environment (BSAGE) Fair. Art and science teacher, Dave Allan takes charge of the recycled paper making booth at the fair. The project is made possible by the Ambassador of the Arts and Environment Grant received from the Arts Council of Monterey. The rain kept the event intimate but there was no shortage of crafty participants at the Pacific Valley School booth (below).



One week later, twenty-five PV participants gathered for the five-mile Annual Earth Day Hike for Health. Despite the rainy weather, hikers of all ages set out on foot to rejoice with Mother Nature. Soggy shoes and wet clothes were worth enduring for the much needed and appreciated rain. Below in the photos, hikers stand among the giant Redwoods at the old Willet Homestead and a handful of students walk back to school along the road overlooking Sandollar Beach.



As if the hike wasn't enough exercise, the very next morning PV's community members traveled to Pacific Grove to run in the Big Sur International Marathon's 3K Fun Run at Lover's Point. Lisa Gering, who works at the school, takes special pride in organizing the event for Pacific Valley School. Again this year, PV won first place for "small school participation" and prize money that goes to the PTO. This was the first year that the 3K event had more participants (over 5,000) than the actual Big Sur Marathon. Below left is PV's 3K runners. Right are the Boxcar Derby Kids.



MORE FUN STUFF...PINWOOD BOXCAR DERBY RACES

First through fourth grade students created their own unique versions of pine wood box cars that ranged from sleek dragsters to elaborate floats and then raced them, two at a time, down a plywood track. Students won certificates for many things such as, motion, acceleration, velocity, artistry and best crash.