

OPINION

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Seaside village offers so many ways to get out, have fun and get involved

Taste of Trinidad is back. The Greater Trinidad Chamber of Commerce presents an evening of local cuisine and beverages on Tuesday, June 21 from 5 to 7 p.m. outdoors in Saunders Park on Janis Court at Patrick's Point Drive.

It's the Summer Solstice and a celebration is in order. The cost is \$20 per person. Sample local wines, beer and local restaurant fare. Reservations are not required.

Music by Fred and Wilma, also known as Jeff Kelly and Peggy Martinez. For questions email Vice President Cammie Anderson at cammiiek62@hotmail.com or call (561) 254-1790.

Go Dragons!

Tyler Vack and Margie Cunningham, middle school teachers at Trinidad School,



❖ TRINIDAD TIDINGS
Patti Fleschner

will present the Class of 2022 to parents and friends at the graduation ceremony on Wednesday, June 8 in the afternoon.

Seating is normally reserved for parents, teachers, school board members and staff, but if you'd like to attend, call Desiree Cather at (707) 677-3631 and ask for details.

For those who like trivia: the first Trinidad School was established in 1870. The school burned down in 1914. The next two-story school was built on the site where the school rests now and it, in turn, burned down in the mid-1940s.

Students were taught in the Town Hall until the current buildings were completed in 1950. In early days, the students were called TUGS (short for Trinidad Union

Grammar School), not Dragons. Not sure when the name changed. Maybe a reader does.

Volunteer vacation

Looking for a fun and rewarding way to show your dedication to public access and trail safety? Join the Trinidad Coastal Land Trust and the American Hiking Society (AHS) any day this week through June 10 at Tepona Point for a trail building work party.

The stairs leading to the bluff at Tepona Point are old and dilapidated, so the crew is replacing these with new crib steps and a railing. The TCLT thanks Bob Battagin, whose love of birdwatching at Tepona Point and his generous donation make this much needed trail project possible. Email zoe@trinidadcoastallandtrust.org for details.

On Tuesday, June 14 from 6 to 7 p.m.

a Zoom Little River Trail Update Public Workshop will be held.

The community is invited to this virtual workshop to learn about progress in advancing a non-motorized trail, connecting Scenic Drive in Westhaven to Clam Beach Drive and the Hammond Coastal Trail. Call to register by calling (707) 677-2501 or email michelle@trinidadcoastallandtrust.org.

A Natural History and Ecology of California Pinnipeds will take place on Wednesday June 22 from 6 to 7 p.m. at Trinidad Town Hall.

Marine ecologist Claire Nasr, specializing in wildlife ecology of seals, sea lions and seabirds, will lead the presentation of fascinating facts about these creatures.

Email Patti at baycity@sonic.net.

The classic 'mother-in-law' gets a new name

In 2008, the telephone stopped ringing at Small World Construction. I was honestly expecting to work 10 more years or so as a builder, until age 75. But that was not to be. As everybody knows, or knows now, the bottom was about to fall out of the real estate market. It was in the air. The Big Silence. I got the message.

After years sitting behind a desk running a construction company, I figured I better get up and try to be a carpenter again. But who is going to hire me? Money had dried up along with the jobs.

I had to think of something. A builder with a family to support can't just sit around and do nothing.

Sitting there in my back yard, in all its historic majesty, was "the barn." Well, "The Barn" was about to become "The Cottage."

Yes, I would turn that old building into a rental and I would call it "the Secret Garden Cottage."

The access to the cottage would be through the overgrown garden in that corner of the yard, which I would dedicate to the cottage space. All I had to do was lay a brick path from the picket fence through a gate, winding gently underneath the limbs of the low-hanging Mayten tree back there, ending at the ground-level porch of the barn's new incarnation as the "Secret Garden Cottage."



❖ THE FUTURE OF ARCATA
Daniel Duncan

ed those extra-long suckers to the studs on opposites sides of the building running down the length. The ends stuck out beyond the edges two feet on each side, allowing external support for the house-mover's blocks.

Then, with a chainsaw, I cut off the floor of the entire building one foot up, poured a concrete pad with a proper footer, added extensions to the studs using 2-by-4 p.t. pieces attached to the new sill (looking a bit ridiculous like chicken legs coming down from their "sisters" the full-dimensioned, rough sawn 2-by-4 redwood studs to which they were attached) ripped off the rotting roof sheathing and repaired the sagging rafters, re-sheathed and re-shingled the roof, stood back and admired my masterpiece, a salvaged outbuilding that looked identical to the one that I started out with (except for a 1-by-12, brand-new, re-sawn redwood board installed horizontally to cover the peg leg new studs), restored to soundness again on the bottom and the top.

Now, after some years of garden shed life, it was time to turn "the barn" into a livable space, what is today called an ADU (an Accessory Dwelling Unit, which in those days was called a mother-in-law.)

The barn's shed roof looked to me like one-half of a roof, which was fine for a barn but not for a building that was to have human inhabitants. A roof needs its other half, but, even though a cottage should have more than 220 square feet, I didn't want to give it another complete half, which would have extended out too far into my precious backyard. So I gave it three feet more of width to form the other side of a gable, which would make the new perimeter wall 10 feet high, and the entire building now 15 by 20 feet, or 320 square feet, a respectable quantity. After all, the name of my company was Small World Construction, and I was not shy of small habitations.

I did not do all this alone, My helper, Sundon, who had worked for me before the shutdown, at 28, stood for the youthful half of our two-man crew. Sundon could do anything well that he had been taught to do, and he would do anything you asked him to do. If he didn't know how to do it he would tell you, in the plainest, matter-of-fact voice, "I don't know how to do that."

The problem then became how to get the idea across to him. Sundon was not a man of words. It was not that he wasn't bright, but somewhere in his upbringing he had learned that only actions matter. I have never seen a person who worked like him, with complete physical dedication to the task. His strong, fit body was



HOW IT'S DONE The author at work on the Secret Garden Cottage back in the day: in this gripping action sequence, Daniel takes a swing at a nail, and... misses. (His other hand, that is, remembering to move it out of the way in time.)

PHOTOS VIA DANIEL DUNCAN



the result of good genes and good work habits. He showed up for work on time with a plastic gallon water jug in one hand and his tool-filled leather apron slung over his other shoulder. He walked onto the job site (in this case my back yard) with his quick workman's pace and said in a deep, no-nonsense voice, "Hello. What do you want me to do first?"

The first thing was to empty the building. I didn't have a garage and I don't believe in them, so I was without the usual place people have to keep their junk. This was going to be the biggest problem of this building project. What was I going to do with 20 years of accumulated home owner and building contractor's crap? Well, that wasn't Sundon's problem, and he wanted to get moving so I instructed him to just start hauling stuff outside into the yard, keeping the different types of stuff together: lumber here, camping supplies there, garden equipment there, and so forth. He set about doing just that and before long gigantic piles began to heap up in the back yard while the family dog Shasta looked on from her basket beside the back door with a look that confirmed her suspicion that her master had allowed a madman to occupy his head.

She did not blame Sundon. She loved Sundon. He, a sane and predictable human being, was just following orders, doing his duty, just as she as the yard dog was expected to do. But I, the tireless instigator of change about the property, was another story.

What was left when Sundon was done hauling out stuff was a 12- by 20-foot building with nothing inside.

I don't know if you have to be a carpenter to be in love with such a building, but I was. Most people would have just torn the thing down and started over. A barn is not a house. The 75-year-old (my estimate) "studs" were originally milled irregularly with the outside

surface installed flush for exterior siding, the inside mattering not at all. The stud width varied up to 3/4 of an inch, from 3 & 5/8 inches to 4 & 3/8 inches. That meant that a wall installed on the inside would need custom made shims on each stud in order to be flat. Instead of doing that, I installed new 2-by-6 fir studs, sistering them on the old ones, but making sure to keep a standard lay out for sheetrock. The over-spanned 2 by 6 rafters got 2-by-8s sistered onto them according to a string line from the cross walls that kept a uniform surface for the interior. This new sistering solved several problems; it stiffened the rafters, provided a vent space along the top of the cavity for the ceiling/roof, superimposed a lay-out for ceiling material, and created a proper space for insulation.

When completed, new white 2-by-6 studs circled the building, and new 2-by-8 rafters spanned the exterior walls, a complete new inner shell for added strength and interior serviceability. It took three times as long to accomplish this as it would have to build the same thing up from ground up. From the outside, however, The Barn looked exactly the same (except for the 3-foot extension and completion of the gable.) Of course, when it was all done, and new cement lap siding covered the entire building, nobody would be able to see a single sign of a barn in the building that stood there. Nobody but me and Sundon.

Towards the end of the project I went on a trip and I left Sundon to complete the last details. Two of the projects baffled my carpenter, since he had never done anything like them before, and without me around he would be working from insufficient memory. I assured him that and he could do it. One of the jobs was the entry roof. I designed a box, a rectangle just a bit larger than the French doors on that elevation with a flat top and a drain. This box was to be supported by

brackets of flat two by fours, an unorthodox design but I was going with a modernistic touch.

The other job was to create a privacy fence seven feet high and 10 feet long out of some old boards retrieved from another fence project taken down years ago. This fence was to be made of simple panels, the 1-by-6 redwood fencing installed vertically within its frame. The idea was to provide privacy for the tenant when entering the building and give me something to see when I looked out my dining room windows besides a tenant fumbling for the house key. The fence would say: your realm stops here and it would say that handsomely because of the old and weathered boards.

Sundon completed both projects, though I had to talk him through the fence design over the phone from New Hampshire. When I got home the carpenter was gone, but his work stood there complete, well executed, a proud testament to the fine work of our unique crew of two, the contractor/designer and the industrious, competent carpenter/helper.

Then it dawned on me, can I retire now? After all, no jobs were on the horizon, but age 66 was on the horizon, and with that, the arrival of Medicare and full Social Security eligibility. I signed up for both and, with the additional income, I now had enough funds to make ends meet, maybe even for the rest of my life, that is, as long as there were renters.

In other words, I, somehow, in the midst of the worst recession in recent history, while getting knocked conclusively out of business, landed, instead of on my ass, my feet.

That is, I was one lucky carpenter to become a not entirely useless old fart when I did.

Daniel Duncan ran Small World Construction in Arcata from 1986 through 2007. Contact him at dduncan362@gmail.com.