



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
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SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization

April 2006



Lettie Connell Schubert
March 6, 1929 - March 21, 2006

Inside this issue...

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Lettie Connell Schubert was born Frances Electa Connell on March 6, 1929 at 10:44 pm at Children's Hospital in San Francisco. She was called Lettie (her grandmother Electa's nickname) or Frances Lettie until she started Marina Junior High School when Electa Connell was told to report to her seventh grade class room. Later she went back to Lettie, the name we all knew her by.

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(Lettie, cont.)

From grammar school on there were puppets in Lettie's life. One of the first shows she did was with playmates in her neighborhood who did plays in various families' basements for parents and friends. In junior high she built and performed a marionette version of "Lima Beans" by Alfred Kreymbourg. In high school she continued her puppetry in Galileo's Variety club and the Little Theater Club. Shortly after graduating high school Lettie sought to improve her puppetry skills by taking an evening class with a family friend, Ralph Chesse. Her association with Ralph and family was long and led her to many puppetry adventures including the TV show "Brother Buzz," department store performances, and a role in "Master Peter's Puppet Show" at the San Francisco Opera House with Enrique Jorda conducting the San Francisco Symphony.

In addition to her work with Chesse, Lettie was developing her own identity as a puppeteer with shows in schools, clubs, libraries and television (Lettie was puppeteer on The Looking Glass Lady Show for KRON-TV, as well as Happy Holly commercials for the old White House Department Store (the White House Department Store showcased Lettie Connell in the '50s in "The Adventures of Benny Bunny" and a three part hand puppet melodrama "The Man Who Hated Christmas.") Later Lettie had a regular spot on The Morning Show. Her characters were Twinkle & George.

In the late 50s Lettie worked with future husband Gage Schubert at a toy store on Grant St. in San Francisco (they married in January of 1961). The store was owned by another puppeteer, Wolo, until Gage bought it from him. Later Gage opened another toy store,



Schubert's Toy Square. Lettie and a German Hohensteiner hand puppet dog apparently were favorites, performing in the show windows to passers-by on the streets.

Lettie took on the directorship of the City of Oakland Recreation Department's Vagabond Puppet Theatre in 1954, and continued as director until 1960. At The Vagabond Puppet Theatre she mentored Jerry Juhl, the third person to join the Muppets as puppeteer and script writer, and she also mentored Frank Oz who joined the Muppets after work with Vagabond and graduating from high school. The Vagabond Puppets Theatre brought puppetry to thousands of children in addition to providing a fine training ground with many jobs for local puppeteers: Paul Miller, Robert Edward Darling, Dahl Delu, Sallie Hanson, Jerry Juhl and Frank Osmotic, Ruth Sicular, Pearl Dailey, Bruce Chesse and Fred Jackson, Julie and Richard Greene, Earl Rhue, Blake Maxam, and Randal Metz.

In 1961 a loosely organized collective of Bay Area puppeteers (who had been

meeting informally since 1954), organized the San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild as a chartered guild of the Puppeteers of America. Lettie was one of these chartered members, and was active in and a leader of the guild until the end of her life. That first year (1961) Lettie took on the task of director of the 1961 National Puppetry Festival (held at Asilomar in Monterey). This would not be her last stint as festival director, as she continued to volunteer her time and expertise to direct a number of additional regional and national festivals held in the west.

In 1968 Lettie and family moved from San Francisco to Mill Valley where in addition to her puppetry activities, she became a vital part of the Mill Valley community, including organizing programs for the annual Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival, where she provided work for puppeteers from the guild by scheduling puppet shows throughout the festival.

Lettie was president of the guild for many years, and is also the author of two small books on puppetry, "A Manual of Hand Puppet Manipulation" and "Getting Your Act Together." Guild members know her as an extremely generous and gentle critic who would travel long distances to watch a beginning puppeteer's performance, then offer suggestions (when asked) that were doable as well as astute. She offered workshops on hand puppet manipulation which started many of us in the right direction. She was a mentor and a guiding light who gave freely of her time and wisdom. We are richer for her life and her influence will continue on.

Lettie lived 77 years. She is survived by her husband Gage, son David, daughter Becky, their spouses and several grandchildren. ♥

Goodbye Lettie,
You were my mentor. We did great puppet shows together. Didn't we have fun? You were my understanding friend. You had a great life. I'm glad I was part of it.

Goodbye Lettie,
Now when you get there arrange for a puppet stage - perhaps between those pearly gates. In our lives we have so few close friends. We were lucky to have our friendship.

Goodbye Lettie,
It can't end here. You'll just have to wait a while. George, Twinkle, Busy Bee and Mrs. Witherspoon will join you one of these days. And I will too. You'll need another puppeteer. Goodbye, for now, Lettie

Your close friend,
Luigi
(from Lewis Mahlmann)

♥♥♥

Lettie Schubert:
The Bay Area and the world of puppetry have suffered a great loss this month. Lettie Schubert has passed on. Lettie was a great friend, a masterful puppeteer, and a mother figure to many of us. I have had the privilege of knowing Lettie for over 30 years, since I first decided to become a professional puppeteer at the age of 10. She was one of the first professionals I encountered through The Puppeteers Guild and Children's Fairyland. Taking me under her wing, she was always there to encourage young talent. She even gave me my first break at the age of 16 when she encouraged me to present at a convention in Asilomar, CA, my version of "Snow White". Lettie has had a wonderful and vibrant career in puppetry. She has designed shows, written and directed them, starred on television with "The Looking Glass Lady" and "Brother Buzz", and carried her talents through to doll making and art sculpture. All with the

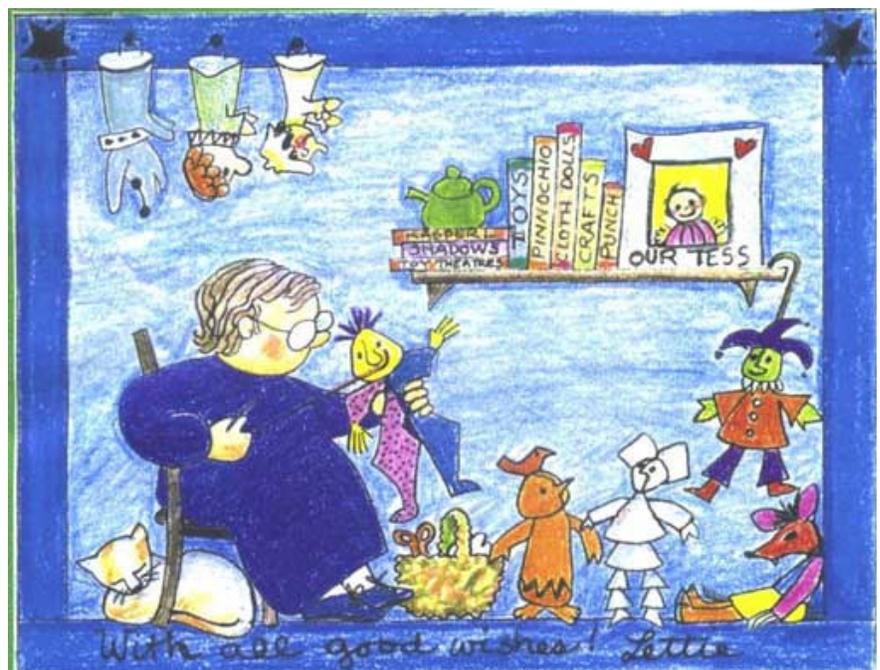
grace and zest for life that Lettie carried in her persona. A mentor to many of us, Lewis Mahlmann included, she nurtured the best in our talents and encouraged us to "reach higher!" For me, she will always be remembered through the Oakland Parks and Recreation Department. While there she directed the famous "Vagabond Players" for many years, and worked hand in hand with Ralph Chesse', Wolo, and William R. Everitt (the architect) for the construction of Children's Fairyland's Storybook Puppet Theater. Although she was never a director of the puppet theater, choosing to stay instead with the Rec. Dept. and then to pursue other goals and motherhood, she has always been a voice over the years helping to maintain the innocence and childlike quality of many of the shows at the park.

Lewis Mahlmann, and I, were overwhelmed a few years ago when Lettie allowed us to produce for the theater one of her 1960's shows. She not only gave us permission, she redesigned the puppets for us (which we made), rendered the scenery, adapted the script to our format, and played the role of the

leading character. "Mrs. Witherspoon's Busy Day" was an enchanting performance and spellbound children who often returned again and again to see it. It was so successful, we were in the first stages of bringing another of Lettie's shows back to the park. Sadly, the children of the Bay Area will never get a chance to enjoy that particular show.

Lettie....wherever you are, we will always remember you and make sure that the values you tried to bring to young puppeteers and to puppet performances in general, will always shine bright and true as we move onward without our favorite mentor/commander by our side. I would like to leave you with Lettie's own words she reminded me of recently when we were talking about the future of puppetry:

"We have gathered for fellowship and to share an interest. We have all made contributions. We have received inspiration, involvement, training. We have gained from giving. We have gained by receiving. We have made



lasting friendships. May we continue to receive, to give, to contribute, and most of all, to elevate the art of puppetry, as friends and colleagues into the next millennium!"

Randal Metz

Storybook Puppet Theater
Children's Fairyland



From Elisheva Hart:

Of course no words can express the pain and sadness of the loss of our Beloved Lettie. Although there was always this outcome, I couldn't believe it possible. Besides all the fantastic things she did for us as puppeteers, as Guild-Mama, as a warm, wonderful, caring person (put this first in the list!), I have a big chunk of me missing. She was the longest, continuous friend I had. She knew me when my kids were young (I remember her youngest, Becky, and my oldest, Patti, both 9 years old, cartwheeling down the sidewalk at Mills College...so we knew each other before this...Patti is in her early 40's now), she was supportive through my divorce and wandering around England and the US, has lived on Eton Way the whole time I've known her...her telephone number is more well known to me than the several I've had. I don't know anybody who knew me during my childhood, high school, college, or early marriage, except my relatives-who are fewer than before-so Lettie was literally my oldest friend in length of our association. I'm glad I had a brief time with her when I picked up the goodies for the Hula day auction and was able to express some of the feelings I had for her at that time and also to speak with her on the phone the day before she entered the hospital. Although I could have done more, I don't feel a lack of closure.



From Michael Nelson:

The details may vary, but I suspect that my story, while personal, has been repeated many, many times with many other fledgling puppeteers during Lettie Connell Schubert's life. Lettie was mentor and inspiration for so many of us, perhaps more than we realized since she guided us with such humble and sincere friendship, generously and selflessly given, that just being around her we absorbed the good she had to offer.

My story: with a newly sprouted interest in puppetry back in the '70s, I heard that there was a puppet organization in the San Francisco Bay Area. In trying to find this "guild" of puppeteers I was almost immediately connected to a short, round, beaming bundle of gentle energy and enthusiasm that seemed to know everything about an art form about which I knew very little. This was Lettie Schubert, and in Northern California, it seemed that all puppet roads led to her in one way or another. Although it is hard to quantify the "what ifs" of the world, it seems quite possible that if I had not met Lettie, and seen the door that she held open, I might have dabbled with and then passed by puppetry, never realizing its potential.

In addition to connecting Valerie and me to the larger puppet community and to the fact that there were people who did puppetry as an avocation, Lettie personally came to many of our early performances and patiently and generously critiqued and guided us to higher levels of performance and puppetry art, doing so gently enough that we could learn and grow while not being discouraged to the point of giving up all together. The only time she really scared me was after an early performance of my one man show at a regional festival, Lettie came up to me after the performance. Always wanting to please the "fairy godmother of

puppetry," Lettie, I was nervous to hear her reaction. She approached me and stated quite bluntly (and in front of a small crowd of puppeteers), "I did not like your performance." I felt my cheeks redden and my world began to whirl. Then with a twinkle in her eye she continued, "I didn't like it, I LOVED it!" I rose from the depths of despair to the heights of elation in an instant! Not only did she come to offer encouragement to our earliest shows, but she continued to support our efforts throughout her life, right up until only a few weeks before her passing when she emailed to say she had to cancel attending due to her health.

Very early in my career Lettie was instrumental in calling my attention to an opportunity to study with Jim Henson at the International Institute of Puppetry in Charleville-Mezieres, France. She helped me to apply and get scholarships to help cover the costs to attend. When we wanted to use that trip to Europe to break into performance overseas, we encountered solid walls of resistance with foreign presenters until Lettie put in a good word for us with Jon and Lyndie Wright of the Little Angel Theatre in London, who, on Lettie's recommendation gave us a weekend of shows in their theatre, sight unseen, thus opening the door for Magical Moonshine's many foreign tours, most of which can be directly connected back to that Little Angel weekend in one way or another.

As a founding member of our guild Lettie for decades was the living repository of guild and puppet history in the Bay Area. My tenure as guild president was simplified in that whenever I encountered a question or problem, I would call Lettie and asked her what her opinion was, then proceed. It was always good advice, and I am sure that my presidency was not unique; I suspect that she led the guild for decades with her quiet words, and her

example of selfless service to the guild and the art of puppetry. Those of us who have been in the guild for a little while will remember many guild meetings at her home, and to go to a festival or puppet event and not see her there seemed unthinkable; one just expected to find Lettie wherever puppetry was happening.

I would have to say that overwhelmingly the Lettie I knew for the last 25 years seemed to be about supporting other puppeteers and inspiring and guiding us all (new puppeteers especially, but not at all exclusively). She was a big advocate of puppet organization, be it guild, regional or national or international. She connected puppet people and groups, and also was excellent at connecting puppeteers with close-but-not-quite-puppetry art forms. She attended shows, and when asked, offered gentle, acceptable, and useful guidance and criticism. She taught puppet manipulation and inspired us all to be better performers. Her input and effect was long term (countable in decades) and ongoing. Lettie was a regular monthly contributor to the guild newsletter (even including the most recent March newsletter with items sent in during her illness, just three weeks before her death). She would send notices about shows, exhibits, books, notices in other periodicals, TV programs and DVDs of interest to puppeteers. Now we won't have those notices in our newsletters; we won't see that impish grin of hers at guild meetings, shows and festivals; we won't have her wit and wisdom gathered over decades of puppet love. I know there are many who will join me in saying that not only will she be missed (in so many ways) but she changed our lives, and her subtle influence runs deep throughout puppetry in the world today and will continue to flow for decades to come.

♥♥♥

poem in honor of our Lettie

L oved everyone.
E ncouraged all. Truly she was our
SFBAPg's Fairy Godmother.
T ruly loved puppetry and everything
about this art.
T ime and again she was there to help
new talents blossom.
I loved her. I will miss her. This shall
be said by many people.
E njoyed life, family, friends, and
puppetry.

That was our Lettie. May her memory
be of comfort to us all.

With aloha and love,
Gale S. Warshawsky
The Hawai'i member of our SFBAPG.

♥♥♥

Lettie Schubert in Memoriam Remembered by Ray DaSilva

I am sad to have to report that Lettie Schubert of Mill Valley, San Francisco passed away surrounded by her family on 21 March 2006. Lettie has been a wonderful friend to many on this side of the Atlantic, she made numerous visits to the UK popping up in all sorts of places. I remember one day walking across London's Waterloo Bridge and suddenly hearing my name called and there was Lettie.

Lettie Connell Schubert has been a member of the British Puppet & Model Theatre Guild for many years and likewise a subscriber to BrUNIMA. Lettie even attended one of the Marsham Puppet Weekends where she did a workshop for us. In the US she undertook an enormous amount of work for the Puppeteers of America, and has been described as the "glue" that held puppetry in California together during the 1950s and 1960s. We first met at a PoA festival in 1957 and since then she has been so generous and helpful in

many ways and became 'family'-only a week or so ago we exchanged annual birthday greetings.

Lettie enjoyed books and over the years we exchanged many, and once when Joan and I stayed at her house I was privileged to have the job of cataloguing her excellent library of puppet books. I recall that it almost filled a room with a sliding door off a corridor, and when we opened it, books fell out into the passage. Her books were not only stuffed into shelves around the walls but with no shelf-space left there were several piles on the floor - Lettie had been so busy in various community arts projects, doing work for others that her own library had been neglected.

Realising the impossibility of my task Lettie went out and purchased four new book-cases which we assembled together and placed back to back in the middle of the room. We sorted the books into alphabetical order of authors except for one section which Lettie described as "old friends" and which she wished to keep in one place.

Lettie wrote and self-published her "Hand Puppet Manipulation" in which she said "You can find reams of stuff on making puppets. but when it comes to making puppets act, the chapters suddenly become short and uninformative." This 20 page booklet is still the best available guide for anyone concerned with the difference between simply 'working' glove puppets and bringing them 'to life'.

Thank you Lettie, we shall always remain "old friends".

Editor's note: As I put together this newsletter, remembrances of Lettie continue to flow in as puppeteers all over the world react to her loss. Please continue to send them and look for them in future issues of the newsletter.

NEXT GUILD MEETING!

Video Puppetry Workshop

Host by Images In Motion

Kamela Portuges, Mike Wick & Lee Armstrong,

Sunday, April 23rd, 2-5 pm

720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma 707 996-9474

Don't miss the April Guild meeting on Sunday, April 23rd at Images In Motion. Images In Motion has a video studio especially designed for puppet shoots. It has been used for a number of children's puppet and music videos. It will be set up for a hands-on workshop, performing in front of the TV camera. Puppets will be available, or BYO puppets. Kamela, Mike and Lee will cover basic manipulation, then how to put it all together in a scene.

Kamela and Mike have just completed another round of the popular Round Table Pizza ads. Lee is returning from 5 months in Vancouver, shooting the PBS series "Mustard Pancakes" (Parent's Choice Gold award.) Images In Motion is currently puppeteering, building puppets and writing scripts for a number of TV shows. Clients include Cartoon Network, Leapfrog Toys, PBS, etc. More info on IIM can be seen at www.imagesmedia.com. There will be lots to see and do. There will also be an opportunity to view puppet videos. If you have a short clip you'd like to show (3-5 min), call 707 996-9474 to get on the program.

Images In Motion is in Boyes Hot Springs, just north of the town of Sonoma, on your way to Santa Rosa. (Come early and explore this beautiful area) Use your favorite way of getting to the town of Sonoma.

Arriving in Sonoma, you will be on Broadway St., looking at the Town Hall in the Square. We are 3.5 miles from downtown.

Turn Left on W. Napa St - go 0.9 mi on W. Napa St/#12 through town and continue on it as it turns north, 1.2 miles, Pass Verano Ave (McDonald's & Denny's at corner)

Look for SFBAPG signs

Turn Right at Calle del Monte (Boyes Springs Food Center at corner)

(If you pass the Sonoma Mission Inn on Boyes Blvd, you've gone too far)

Turn Left on Central Ave. (Calle del Monte ends here)

Go 2 houses. Take first Right (Calle del Arroyo)

Take first Left (Ladera Drive)

720 Ladera Drive is the blue house on the left. The studio is to the left, behind the house.

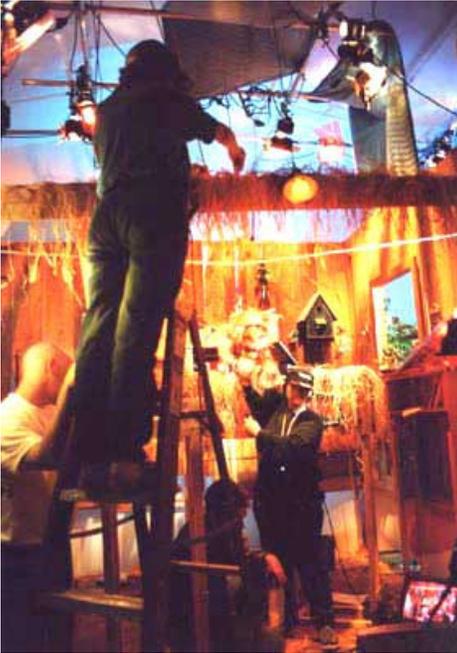
Parking space is limited. **Please carpool.** There are a few spaces in front of the house, and a few down the driveway of the studio, on the right side of the house. Please don't park opposite our house as it makes it difficult for our neighbor. You may want to park on Central, or Calle de Arroyo.

If convenient, please bring finger foods or drinks for the refreshment table.



THE MEDIEVAL MARKET PLACE Hear ye! One of the high points of any festival is the market place where expert craftsmen doth display their wares. Rare manuscripts (puppetry books)! Exotic carvings (puppet parts)! Knickknacks (?????)! So ye merchants, gather up thy chattel (Anything that is not nailed down), pack up thy saddle bags and wend thy way to the MUCH ADO ABOUT PUPPETS market place. Shouldst thou be confined to thy castle and not be able to attend, send thy goods to Jeanine Bartelt, 1525 24th S.E. , Auburn, WA 98002-837
Craftsmen, thou shalt find a market for the fruits of thy labors. Seekers and shoppers, thou shalt find thy hearts' desires. Check out the festival web site for recent updates! www.muchadoaboutpuppets.org

Much Ado About Puppets, August 4-7, University of Puget Sound



Images in Motion TV Studio, the site of the April Guild meeting! Don't miss this chance to try your hand on TV on April 23rd from 2:00 to 5:00 (see page 6 for details).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Nick Barone Puppets Listings:

Monday, April 3, 2006 - 7:00 pm
 "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
 Novato Library
 1720 Novato Blvd., Novato, CA

Tuesday, April 4, 2006 - 3:30 pm
 "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
 Corte Madera Library
 707 Meadowsweet Drive, Corte Madera, CA

Tuesday, April 4, 2006 - 7:00 pm
 "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
 Point Reyes Station Library
 11431 State Route 1, Point Reyes Station, CA

Wednesday, April 6, 2006 - 3:30 pm
 "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
 Civic Center Branch Library

3501 Civic Center Drive #427, San Rafael, CA

Thursday, April 6, 2006 - 6:30 pm
 "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
 South Novato Branch Library
 6 Hamilton Landing, Suite 140A, Novato, CA

Saturday, April 8, 2006 - 12:15 pm
 "Tales from the Enchanted Forest"
 Bay Area Discovery Museum
 East Fort Baker, 557 McReynolds Road, Sausalito, CA

Sunday, April 09, 2006 - 11:30 am & 1:30pm
 "Tales from the Enchanted Forest"
 California Academy of Science
 875 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA

Wednesday, April 12 - 11:00 am
 "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
 Marin County Free Library
 Gateway Shopping Center, 164 Donahue Street, Marin City, CA

Magical Moonshine/Little Blue Moon Listings:

April 2 - Sonoma, CA - The Bear Flag Show (a rare performance of MMT's California historical program about the raising of the first California Bear Flag. At the Sonoma Community Center, 3:00 pm. For ticket and other info call Sonoma Community Center at 707-938-4626x1.

April 8 - Puppetales! A playshop for ages 4-8. Time: 3:30 pm. Price: \$20.00. Location: Studio Arts Napa Valley, 2931 Solano Ave. Napa, CA 94558. For info and reservations call 707-257-8007. Theme for this playshop: Aesop's Fables. Participants watch a puppet show, listen to stories, play puppet games and songs, put on their own puppet show and take home a puppet.

Totally fun for all!

April 8 - Little Blue Moon Theatre performance/workshop: A complete performance of an original paper theatre play "Dracula del Lobo" followed by a workshop demonstration of how all of the exciting and beautiful effects are created using digital collage, lighting and imagination! Price: \$20.00. (\$14.00 for guild members) Location: Studio Arts Napa Valley, 2931 Solano Ave. Napa, CA 94558. Time: 8:00 pm. For info and reservations call 707-257-8007.

Upcoming events for Buddy Big Mountain (for more info contact Diane Big Mountain at PSWPuppets@aol.com

1976 - 2006 marks Buddy's 30th year as Ventriloquist and Puppeteer. To celebrate Buddy created a new show called "Dances with Strings". A 45 minute show displaying his beautiful hand made Naive Dancers with a new member to cast. That show will be performed at Maria Bodman and Greg Williams festival "Celebrate Puppetry" on May 27th.

April 6th Audition for Simon Cowell
 April 8th thru April 26th in Production for Puppet Pow Wow
 April 28th Night in Fullerton at the Museum
 April 29th Faces in Fullerton (assisting in Shadow Puppetry)

Add to your roster

Rejoining member:
 Margie Rex
 Palettee Puppets
 1742 Higgins Ave
 Santa Clara, CA 95051
 Day/eve 408 296-5006
Cscapes@msn.com

There is a typo on the 2006 SFBAPG Directory.
 Luman Coad's correct phone is 604-988-7724