



The San Francisco Accordion Club



World's First Accordion Club 1912-2009



Newsletter for December 2009

*The
official instrument of San
Francisco*

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Newsletter

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Merry Christmas



President's Message

As the last few days of the year fade away, it is time to think of the new one about to make its presence very soon. Our Executive Board has been lining up talent to get us off to a roaring start. Let me tell you about it.

January 17, 2010 we will start with one of our favorite soloists and fast fingers guy, Mike Zampiceni. Every once in a while, he slows down and plays some terrific jazz. Then we will be hearing Alex Roitman and his group, *Tangonero*, playing the most authentic tango sounds you will ever hear. Every member of his group is a master at what they do. Alex plays smooth runs that melt from one beautiful melody to another and gives the tango its special sound.

The second half of the program will continue with a very special guest, Bonnie Birch. She makes an

occasional trip to the Bay Area from her home in Seattle and, when we are lucky, we are able to get her to play for us. She is devoted to making the accordion take its deserved position amongst other well-established instruments. Bonnie has won many awards across the country in festivals, competitions and performance. We know you will appreciate her performance.

On February 21, our good friend and member Josephine Pellegrini will bring her popular group, the *Aurora Mandolin Orchestra*, to serenade us with beautiful melodies. Her group consists of a number of mandolins along with guitars, bass and accordion. I heard the group recently when they played in Redwood City and they received a standing ovation. The second part of the program will be Don Nurrisso's trio. Don is the accordionist for the Aurora Mandolin Orchestra. He plays a most tasteful style of accordion and is always a

pleasure to listen to.

Moving on to March 21, we will have yet another great local musician with us, Bart Beninco, a long time member and friend of the San Francisco Accordion Club. He hasn't played for us for some time because of a health problem but he is doing well and we are looking forward to his return. Sharing the program with Bart will be Nada Lewis. You will find her as "Miss April" in the 2010 Accordion Babes Pin-Up Calendar. If you didn't get one, there may be a few left. Nada plays East European music along with music of other cultures. The program will also introduce a new group to us when Joe Simoni brings his trio for their first appearance. Joe is a member of *AbsolutAccord* who played for us recently. We look forward to hearing them.

Finally, on April 18 we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the S.F. Accordion Club. We plan to share our stories

President's Message

continued

November's Musical Meeting...

of how the club was formed when a small group of us met at **Wood-lake Joe's in April 1990**. We hope to have many past members join us for this special occasion. We will also welcome back member Bruce Kirschner and the *Klez-makers*. They have an outstanding clarinetist who bends notes, slurs and chirps, the likes of which you won't hear in any other music but Klezmer. It promises to be an afternoon of fun.

Beyond April we are considering a return of **"Ladies' Night."** All women accordionists would be invited to join in and make it a mid-afternoon "night" with the stage reserved for them only.

So mark your calendars and we'll see you there!

Frank Montoro

Happy Birthday Vince!

We would like to extend congratulations and best wishes to esteemed SFAC member Vince Cirelli as he celebrates his birthday on December 21!



President Frank Montoro opened the meeting by announcing the construction of a new ferry terminal right outside the building—yes, even on Sunday the crew was working diligently. Frank introduced and welcomed two new members, who signed up today: Johnny Hansen (who does wonderful sketches!) and Jean Moshofsky.

It was a special treat to see our long-time friends and performers Jackie Jones and Pauline Schulten here after several years. We hope to get them to perform for us again soon!

Many hands went up when Frank asked if there were any first-timers or guests.

Frank displayed and described the "Accordion Babes" calendar for 2010. Wow! Another masterpiece—and some of the "Babes" were present to perform for us. Read on . . .

MC for the musical portion of the program was Accordion Babe and a Director of our club, Skyler Fell of Accordion Apocalypse, where **among other things, Skyler "operates on" accordions.**

Skyler then introduced our first player—*not one of the "Babes"!*—Ed Gorzyski. **Ed's first piece was written by Ed himself several years ago:**



Ed Gorzyski

Don's Polka. Ed began a story line with the song titles. He narrated the progress of the story as he went along: *Let Me Call You Sweetheart; You Can't Be True, Dear; She Told Me She Loved Me; Give Me Back My Heart (Daj Daj)* with a Bavarian Interlude that sounded just like Harry Gay's *Iupali*, and then back to *Daj Daj*. Another Interlude and then *My Happiness: A Summer Place* (Carmel, from the 1959 movie); ***In The Mood, I'm In the Mood for Love; Blue Skirt Waltz*** (with vocal); *Mala Femmena; Just Because* and *Until We Meet Again*.

Very nice and relaxing, Ed, as well as entertaining and hilarious in places. I enjoyed it very much.

We're getting pleasantly used to hearing Accordion Babe for May 2010 Salane Schultz. She was once a student of Lou Soper. After Lou passed away we lost track of Salane for a while, until Val ran into her in a restaurant in Alameda and got her started again, studying now with Lou Jacklich. She played and sang a piece she wrote herself called *Where We All Come From*, followed by one of the loveliest tangos, *Jalousie*. You can readily hear how



Salane Schultz

. . . Something out of the Ordinary!

much Salane has improved in recent years. Then when she embarked on *Bumble Boogie*, including the famous boogie bass, there was no doubt about her improvement. I used to play *Bumble Boogie* on piano and was very proud of it, but to play that bass on accordion, **that's no mean feat.**

Next up was our MC herself, Skyler Fell who performed with her friend Bar-B Rader, with Skyler on accordion and Bar-B on washboard.

Skyler presented her accordion repair shop helper, Ariel McGurty. Skyler and Bar-B played two songs, *The Cuckoo* and *Griselda*, both in the genre of



Bar-B Rader & Skyler Fell

"Traditional Americana" folk music.

Renée de la Prade of **Culann's hounds**, bright pink pigtails flying, playing her button box, is always very entertaining. Teaming up with excellent guitarist Mike Kelleher, together they played some very lively Irish and Zydeco tunes.

Renée and Mike started off with a Zydeco number, *La Porte en Arrière* (The Back Door), followed by an oldie that some of us have sung since the **50's**, *Sloop John B.* Oh that brought back memories of the Kingston Trio and the days when we all sang! As they played I remembered all the words **and couldn't help singing** along.



Mike Kelleher & Renée de la Prade

got the title right, they played "Zydekirish" (?) and some "alternative rock" from the 1990's. Renée danced

Renée did a lot of stomping and dancing with her button box. Then, if I

so hard, with her button box, that her hat kept falling and landing upside down! Their act ended with some very fast Irish music with everyone clapping.

Renée is the organizer of the "Accordion Babes" calendar and is shown on the cover of the 2010 calendar. Thanks for a great show, Renée and Mike!

We are fortunate whenever we can get Big Lou (Linda Seekins) and hubby Dave, because they are so well known, they are always in demand. Big Lou is **the "Accordion Princess" and her band is known as "Polka Casserole."** They play every type of music you can



Accordion Princess—Big Lou and husband Dave

think of. Lou and Dave started off with a rather fast ballad, *Amelia Earhart*; **then Lou switched to a 1930's Italian accordion for French music: *Padam-Padam* (one**



Audience Participation!

of my favorite songs and fun to play). This one got Renée and Mike out onto the dance floor. When they came to a Norteño **song, Lou's favorite, Dave put on a sombrero**—in fact he had several hats that he switched according to the music. They continued with different types of music (and hats)—a polka with funny vocal, a Latin number, more dancing by Renée and Mike. Oh yes, Linda (Lou) is Miss August in the 2010 Accordion Babes calendar.

Thanks Big Lou and Dave—**we're ready for you anytime!**

Moving on to an entirely different musical experience, Rob Reich blew everyone away with his very technical and very musical performance. Rob, although not an Accordion Babe (He said he was miffed and

More from November's Musical Meeting

asked why not "Accordion Hunks?!!!), has several bands

and performs in many places. He played an Italian waltz in a minor key with lots of technique and dynamics. This first piece showed us immediately what a truly gifted musician Rob is. Then Rob played a 100-year-old Ragtime piece, a Kurt Weill piece from the 30's



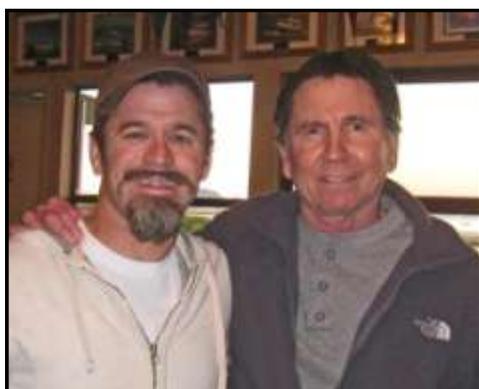
Rob Reich

(after *Three-Penny Opera*), then a Klezmer wedding number, a Chopin piece, then *I Surrender Dear* from 1931. Rob pointed out that Guido and Pietro Deiro were founding members of the first SFAC ca. 1909! Rob's last pieces were *My Treasure* waltz and the beautiful French *Perles de Cristal*. (I have the music for the last one and it is VERY difficult—I can't even begin to play it.)

Add Rob's warm, witty and engaging personality, and you have a terrific finale to a great afternoon!

Val

This month we also have a special treat. New member Johnny Hansen is a caricature artist and offered a few of his "doodles" from our last meeting.



New member Johnny Hansen (left) pictured with founding member Dominic Palmisano

For a little fun, the sketches have not been labeled. (Hint: They all performed at the meeting.) I think from Johnny's talented renderings you can guess who is pictured.

Randy



Fun fact!

Did you know . . .

that composer Leroy Anderson, amongst many talents, also played the accordion?



Leroy Anderson entertaining fellow soldiers in the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps during WW II.

It seems fitting in this holiday newsletter to shed some light on this fellow accordionist given that one of **Mr. Anderson's most popular and recognizable compositions** is *Sleigh Ride*, first recorded in 1949 by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra.

Leroy was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1908 to Swedish immigrant parents. His mother, an accomplished pianist and organist, taught him to play piano as soon as he was tall enough to reach the keys. In 1919 he began instruction at the New England Conservatory of Music and had begun composing while still in high school. In 1926 Leroy entered Harvard University, graduating with a B.A. in 1929 and an M.A. Music in 1930, studying with some of the great notables in

the music field, even to this day. Along his path of musical training, in addition to piano, Leroy learned to play organ, trombone, double-bass AND the accordion. It is **also interesting to note that in the 1930's Leroy also** pursued a PhD in German and Scandinavian languages, which served him well during WW II.

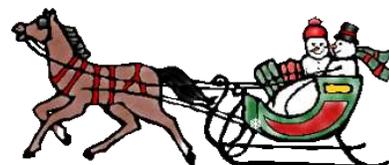
During his time at Harvard, Leroy directed and wrote many arrangements for the Harvard University Band, which ultimately caught the attention of Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Pops Orchestra. Thus began a long relationship between Leroy and Arthur Fiedler, the latter encouraging the former to create original compositions and debuting and recording many of these works, to the success of both Leroy and the Boston Pops Orchestra.

By the 1950s Leroy was considered the pre-eminent American composer of light concert music. He started composing *Sleigh Ride* in the middle of a heat wave, when his family was on a summer vacation in 1946. Other popular favorites composed by Leroy include *Blue Tango* and *Bugler's Holiday*, to name only a very few.

Leroy passed away from cancer in 1975. In 1976, he received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his **contribution to the recording industry. Leroy's music** lives on in the many recordings as a staple of American **popular culture every time we "Just hear those sleigh bells jingling. Ring-ting-tingling too."**

We gratefully thank Mrs. Eleanor Anderson and family for allowing us to reprint the photo of Leroy and for the biographical information used to prepare this article at www.leroyanderson.com.

As an additional treat for those computer enabled - what could be a better conclusion than to hear *Sleigh Ride* performed on the accordion? http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC7YUlcDD_s



The Technique Corner

As Lynn Ewing **promised in last month's Vice-President's column, she has prepared the following interesting and helpful article on some useful instruction from the Las Vegas convention. Thank you Lynn!**

Properly positioning your Accordion

I learned a lot of things in Las Vegas, and one of the important things was holding the accordion properly, in a workshop from Gina Branelli of the UK.

I have been playing the accordion since I was 7 years old, and have gotten very comfortable with how I hold the instrument. However, various folks, including Richard Yaus, Bob Smith, Mary Tokarski, John Bonica and others have given me an inkling that perhaps I should consider making some adjustments to my positioning. I decided to take advantage of someone **who didn't know me well to try to learn this, as it can be hard to accept advice when you've been playing a certain way for years!**

It is always hard for an old dog to learn new tricks, but maybe some of you will find my new insights helpful, and also perhaps prevent some injuries. I found this quite awkward at first, and embarrassing as well, but very worthwhile!

Instrument Positioning - First, and most importantly, the instrument should be positioned so that the keyboard is under the CHIN. In order to do this, I had to make drastic adjustments to my straps. The

left hand strap has to be very snug, and I had to take my straps in to the shoe man to poke additional holes in my left hand strap. Mary Tokarski mentioned that she sometimes has to order two sets of straps in order to get the left hand strap small enough for her.

Most accordions are very well balanced. The way to get the correct positioning is to balance the accordion bellows on the left thigh. Then, you should be able to slip your arms into the straps, essentially without **ing the accordion move at all. This way, the accordion's** weight will be off your shoulders and you will have the keyboard under your chin. You will need to have somebody hold the accordion for you so that you can adjust your straps. The accordion should be more or less straight up and down, not tilted to one side or the other. For most people, the top of the keyboard should be about level with the top of the shoulder. If you have a long torso or a small accordion, you might have to put the accordion a little lower.

When sitting, you should sit at a height so that your thighs are absolutely level. Your feet should be flat on the ground, about shoulder width apart. The keyboard should lock into your right thigh, but not so far into it **that you don't have access to your highest notes. In** other words, the keyboard rests about an inch into your thigh. You should sit on the edge of the chair, so that your back is straight. Tucking your feet under you or stretching them out puts pressure on your back, and can cause injury.

Getting the correct positioning on both right and left hands is easier when you have the accordion positioned this way. As everyone has told us forever, on the right side, the arm and wrist should be straight out from the elbow, with the shoulder relaxed, and the fingers curved and resting lightly on the keyboard. The left hand positioning was very tricky for me. I have been playing my bass with 3-2 fingering forever. **However, I discovered when playing Frank Morocco's lovely** music that my fifth finger was a problem. I never really learned how to use it, and part of the problem **was that my left hand wasn't positioned properly on the** bass side. The bass strap should be approximately at the wrist bone. To get the proper positioning, put your



The *BEST* way to position the accordion!



NOT the best way—**don't** let that smile fool you!

The Technique Corner (continued)

Coming in January!

hand through the strap and rest all 5 fingers in a row starting with little finger on C, 4 on G, etc. and make sure you can reach the counter bass row in this way as well. Again, try not to cock the wrist in relation to the



The *BEST* positioning for the left hand!



NOT the best positioning of the left hand!

hand. Another thing that Gina suggested was that 4-3 fingering is really much better for playing, and keeps the hand and wrist in a better position. This is not something you can change overnight! It will be a process of some months before I am able to accomplish this.

When pulling the bellows, you need to pull back toward your body rather than out into the air. The left elbow is kept fairly close to the body, but not crammed in, so that you have a full range of motion on the bellows, and you have some support for the bellows as well.

Good luck, and if you have any questions, please feel free to talk with me at a meeting!

Lynn Ewing



The Newsletter is Going Online!!!

For those with email and are Internet enabled, in January you will be able to begin opting out of receiving **the monthly newsletter in your "snail" mail box and access, download, and print it directly from our website.**

This new option is not mandatory, but it has several advantages: 1. you can see the pictures and other graphics in color in every issue. 2. you can view the current and past newsletters directly from our website or download them to your computer for viewing or printing anytime, even when not connected to the Internet. No more lost newsletters! 3. You will help save the environment—fewer trees will be sacrificed and less chemical pollution from paper and ink processing and 4. you will be helping the club to contain costs—every year postage and publication costs continually increase.

Only members who elect to access the newsletter online will be able to do so. To protect this benefit you receive as a dues paying member, we will send you a link in an email rather than making the location of the newsletter public. As an added measure, you will be provided a simple ID and password to enter. Each month you will receive an email when the new newsletter is available, that will contain the information needed to access the newsletter, along with a few helpful tips.

To enroll, please email me (Randy Hicks) at: hickr01@sprintmail.com. There is no deadline, you may enroll anytime. Once you are enrolled, I will confirm that you can successfully view the newsletter online before removing your name from the newsletter mailing list. You will continue to receive other mailings from the **club as usual. Lastly, if you enroll and find that it isn't working for you, you can contact me again and resume receiving the newsletter through the mail.**

I do hope you will consider taking advantage of this option—we already have at least three members eagerly waiting and we would welcome many more. Please do not hesitate to email me or approach me at a meeting if you have any questions or concerns.

Randy Hicks,
Newsletter Production Editor

News and Announcements

Our Sincere Thanks!

To those who generously donate to the Club.

With each new membership year we start a new cumulative list of donors. If you have donated and your name doesn't show up in this column, please contact Val at (510) 531-4836 or vtkacc@ifn.net and let her know. We greatly appreciate your support and we want to be sure you are recognized. We gratefully acknowledge donations from: Ross and Laureen Bausone, Xavier de la Prade, Lynn Ewing, Lou Fabbri, Johan and Marja Gullmes, Ron Harris, Randall Hicks, Val Kieser, **Bruce Kirschner, Herb Meier, Frank Montoro, Sundi O'Mara, Larry and Paula Re, Alex Roitman, Maryanne Romanowski (with a matching employer grant), Paul Thiel, Scott Williamson, Barbara Winter, Lore Warren, Richard Yaus & Mark Zhagel.**

Mark your Calendars

The following Accordion events are coming up:

Accordion Cruise Festival April 17–24, 2010. San Francisco Accordion Club members are invited to **receive a € 25 per person discount on 1 or 2 bed bookings** in a double cabin. For more details visit the English language section of www.fisarmonicheincrociera.com.

2010 American Accordionists' Association Competition and Festival July 14-18, Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel, Harrisburg, PA. For more information visit: www.ameraccord.com

2010 Accordionists and Teachers Guild Competition and Festival July 21-25. It is never too soon to mark your calendars for this event being held in our own back yard (San Jose). Visit: www.accordions.com/atg

Welcome New Members!

Two new new members have joined our club this past November. Johnny Hansen of San Francisco, who plays piano accordion and enjoys all types of music. He is also a talented caricature artist. And Jean Moshofsky, also of San Francisco. **Jean plays piano accordion and enjoys "oldies", classical, European and "anything interesting."** **A hearty Welcome!**

San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble News

The SF Accordion Chamber Ensemble gave their fall concert on Sunday, November 29 in Piedmont. The concert was very well received, with record attendance, and the Ensemble received meaningful compliments from professional **classical musicians. The Ensemble would like to give special thanks to Joseph Smiell, Joe Smiell's son, who helped out by playing with the Ensemble for the concert, and more special thanks to Joe Smiell, who arranges all the music in 10 parts, writing it out *by hand*.** The Ensemble will be playing at the SFAC Christmas Party meeting December 20, performing both Christmas and other popular numbers.

San Francisco Accordion Band News

The SF Accordion Band held their annual band dinner November 14. Barbara and Vic Corsiglia were presented with a gift card for dinner for two at their favorite restaurant, for their dedication and contribution to the band, especially the Italian Heritage Parade. We had a lively good time, and several people played their accordions including some duets. Good people, good food and good music, what more could you ask for? The SF Accordion Band has also been working hard and will be performing at the SFAC Christmas Party. Soon work will begin on a new program for spring!

SFAC Scholarship Program

Scholarships are awarded each April and October. The Scholarship requirements have been distributed to area teachers and are available upon request. Application forms are available at the monthly meetings or from any board member and must be returned to a board member by the end of either March or September to be considered for award the following month.

News and Announcements (continued)

Who is performing around the Bay?

Steve Balich, North Bay (707) 874-3494

Ron Borelli, Peninsula (650) 574-5707
rborelli@aol.com

Renée de la Prade, **Culann's Hounds**,
San Francisco www.sfhounds.com

Richard Denier, Carmel rdenier@sbcglobal.net

Peter Di Bono, San Francisco
peterdsf@gmail.com

Reno Di Bono, South Bay
ourhike@aol.com

William De Michelis, South Bay
wdd777@comcast.net

Bruce Kirschner and The Klezmakers,
kirschner@aol.com
www.klezmakers.com

Joe Domitrowich, South Bay
www.capricious-accordion.com or
www.alpinersusa.com

Don Nurisso, nurisso@mindspring.com
Mike Zampiceni, South Bay eclecticguy@comcast.net

Due Zighi Baci, (Sheri Mignano) San
Francisco www.zighibaci.com or
zighi@sonic.net



Please Remember!

To leave our meeting hall at the beautiful Oyster Point Yacht Club clean! Please clean up any food or drink spills and toss out paper plates, napkins, cups, etc. before leaving. Thank you!

SF Accordion Band Practice

Wednesdays, December 9 and 16,
7:00 p.m. at Val Kieser's home in Oakland. Please CALL AHEAD in case there is a change. Everyone is welcome to join. For more information, contact Val (510) 531-4836 or vtkacc@ifn.net

Our Neighboring Bay Area Accordion Clubs

Accordion Club of the Redwoods (ACR) meets monthly on the third Monday, 7:30 p.m. at Hermann & Sons Hall, 860 Western Avenue, Petaluma. Contact: Kris Nelson krisnelson@aol.com or (707) 795-4860

Silicon Valley Accordion Society (SVAS) **meets monthly on the first Sunday, 1:30 at Harry's Hofbrau, 390 Saratoga Avenue between Keily Blvd and Stevens Creek Blvd, San Jose.** Contact: Bill Toponga (408) 984-5290

Golden State Accordion Club (GSAC). The Vacaville Chapter meets monthly on the second Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. at Creekside Bar & Grill, 555 Main Street, Vacaville. The Humboldt Chapter meets monthly on the third Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. at Humboldt Swiss Club, 5403 Tompkins Hill Road, Loleta. The Sacramento Chapter meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. at the Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd, Sacramento. Contact for all three Chapters: Carole Enneking (707) 864-2359

Good Time Accordion Club (GTAC) meets monthly on the second Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. at Escalon Community Center, 1055 Escalon Ave, Escalon. Contact: (209) 545-3603

Northern California Accordion Society (NCAS) meets monthly on the first Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. at Lutheran Church Hall, 6365 Douglas, Blvd, off Hwy 80, Granite Bay, CA. Contact: Vince Cukar (916) 791-3041

Your Club Wants YOU!!

Don't panic— we want you to play for our musical meetings! If you think you aren't ready for the "big time" (stage) just yet, please consider playing a piece or two before the meeting and/or during intermission! Don't be shy—we are a very forgiving, appreciative and supportive audience! Just contact any of our friendly board members listed on the front of the newsletter.

SFAC Membership

\$30.00 per year for individual or family membership. Meeting admission is \$5.00 for members and \$7.00 for guests. For membership renewal, please send a check to: S.F.A.C., c/o Valerie Kieser, 3437 Crane Way, Oakland, CA 94602. For new members, please include your name and address along with your check, as well as a phone number and email address, if available.

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Members may place one small ad for one month free of charge in a given year; after that the charge is \$6.00 per issue. A business-card-size ad costs \$6 per issue or \$60 per year for members; a quarter-page ad costs \$15.00 for members; a half-page ad costs \$25 for members. A full-page ad costs \$50.00 for members. Discount available for ongoing ads. Ads placed by non-members will cost twice the above-quoted prices. A flyer advertising an event may be included in one issue for \$30 for members, \$60 for non-members.

NEXT MEETING:



Sunday, December 20, 2009
2:00 p.m. Oyster Point Yacht Club



Entertainment:

The San Francisco Accordion Band

Bob Smith Lynn Ewing

The San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble

Directions to Oyster Point Yacht Club, 911 Marina Blvd, South San Francisco:
From 101 traveling either North or South, take the Oyster Point exit. Turn right onto Marina Blvd. (be careful not to turn right onto Gull Drive, just before Marina Blvd.). Continue past the gate house to the sign "Oyster Point Yacht Club." There is plenty of parking and ramp access.

And come visit us online at our newly upgraded website: www.sfaccordionclub.com

*Newsletter of the
San Francisco Accordion Club*

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