

**Marin Conservation League**  
**Walk Into (Conservation) History #14**  
**Saturday, April 5, 2014**  
**Cypress Grove, Audubon Canyon Ranch**  
**Tomales Bay**



*Wyn Hoag*

**Walk Leaders**

**Nona Dennis, Director,  
Marin Conservation League**

**Dr. Marty Griffin**

**John Kelly, Ph.D., Director of Conservation Science,  
Audubon Canyon Ranch**



Protecting Marin Since 1934

175 N. Redwood Dr., Ste. 135, San Rafael, CA 94903 415.485.6257 [marinconservationleague.org](http://marinconservationleague.org)

Marin Conservation League was founded in 1934 to preserve, protect and enhance the natural assets of Marin County.

# Marin Conservation League Walk Into (Conservation) History # 14

## CYPRESS GROVE, AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

### MARCH 1, 2014 – 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.



Leslie Sophia Lindell

## Introduction to Today's Walk

To commemorate its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009, Marin Conservation League initiated a series of Walks into the park and open space lands that have come to define the landscape of Marin. This year is MCL's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and we are continuing to commemorate the people with vision who recognized many decades ago that Marin's bays and shorelines, forests and woods, wetlands and coastal prairies, and cultural heritage would not survive for future generations unless they were permanently protected.

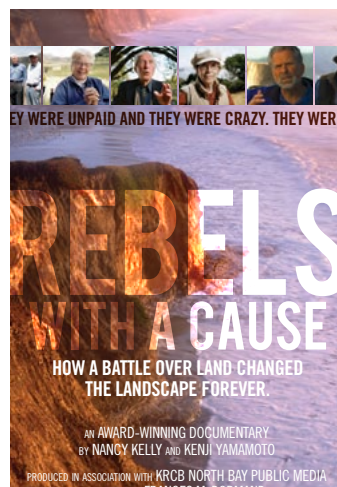
Permanent protection of land does not happen

easily; every piece of parkland and open space that the public can now enjoy in Marin came at a price in human effort and persistence as well as in funds from many different sources. Every acre of protected land and water carries its own story of conservation, often spanning years of dedicated effort. Since its founding in 1934, MCL has played a significant role in many of these stories. In today's story, however, the central role is played by Dr. L. Martin Griffin – "Marty" – along with many others who joined him in the battles to save first Bolinas Lagoon, then Tomales

Bay and West Marin, from development. MCL is proud to have played a supporting role in certain phases of this drama.

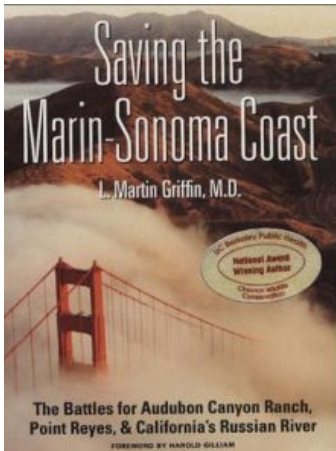
The 1960s was a pivotal decade in the conserving of Marin County. The flavor of that time is captured in the documentary "Rebels With a Cause." But the day-to-day strate-

gies and politics are best documented in Marty's book "Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast: The Battles for Audubon Canyon Ranch, Point Reyes, and California's Russian River." In the Foreward, Harold Gilliam, for many years the *San Francisco Chronicle's* premier environmental reporter, writes: "In a series of Perils-of-Pauline cliffhangers, Griffin tells here how it (conserving land) was done. He describes the players in the drama—as colorful a cast of heroes and villains as you will find anywhere—the strategy, the tactics, the political maneuvers, the techniques of persuasion and pressure, the coordination of grassroots efforts, the struggles with



bureaucracy and corporate greed, the defeats and the victories.”

Today we are going to highlight some of the sto-



ries in Marty’s book, beginning with his awareness in 1961 of the numerous threats to Bolinas Lagoon (which he remembered from his first view of the Lagoon from the Dipsea Trail at the age of 13), through a succession of strategic land acquisitions over the next decade that had the effect of securing both the Lagoon and Tomales Bay and much of West Marin from freeways, marinas, logging, and massive development.

## ***A History of Audubon Canyon Ranch in Brief***

*Adapted from [www.egret.org](http://www.egret.org)*

After its acquisition in 1961, Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) became “ground zero” for the decade of conservation activity that followed. These days, however, ACR

is more than a ranch—it is a “complex” of four preserves, each with its unique ecological character. Our focus is on the first two, with the latter two adding incredible biological diversity, scientific significance, and educational value to the complex.

### **Bolinas Lagoon and Martin Griffin Preserve**

It was the early 1960s, and the political climate of Marin County was pro-growth. Inspired by the success of grassroots organizations in preserving Richardson Bay in the late 1950s, Marty wondered if the same approach could be used to help save the wildlife of Bolinas Lagoon in West Marin from a proposed freeway. He was president of the fledgling Marin Audubon Society at the time and had learned from Caroline Livermore, co-founder of Marin Conservation League, the first lesson of land acquisition – “Flash the cash and let them know you mean business!”

The 503-acre Tevis dairy ranch was being subdivided for development. Within the ranch,



a redwood grove where herons and egrets nested was to be logged. The lagoon where they feed was to be dredged and developed as a marina, and a four-lane freeway was to be built that would separate the nesting site from feeding grounds.

Marty became aware of the pending development and asked for a meeting with the owner of the property known as Canyon Ranch, which included the nesting grove of redwood trees. Marin Audubon’s objective was to investigate purchasing the property. With the help of many dedicated individuals—including Aileen Pierson and Stan Picher—and the other Bay Area Audubon Society chapters, a grassroots fundraising campaign was waged. The land was purchased, saving it from development and the heronry from ruin.

A long history of land acquisition had begun. In 1962, Audubon Can-



*Left—  
Dr. Marty Griffin  
Top—  
Caroline Livermore*

yon Ranch (ACR) was formally created as a locally-based independent nonprofit organization, and the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve (later renamed Martin Griffin Preserve) became its first preserve. Soon thereafter 500 more acres were acquired, forming today’s 1,000-acre Martin Griffin Preserve of ACR. A key to preventing development of the lagoon as a massive marina and resort complex, and loss of the birds’ feeding grounds, was the 110-acre Kent Island, owned by the Kent Family. It was the gained through political sleight-of-hand and extensive fundraising by The Nature Conservancy, Marin Conservation League, and ACR and turned over to the County of Marin, where it is now an Open Space Preserve.

### **Tomales Bay and Cypress Grove**

With hundreds of acres successfully preserved in perpetuity in southern coastal Marin County, ACR leadership became interested in conserving land along Tomales Bay. Marty Griffin approached landowner Clifford Conly to discuss his property on the northeastern edge of the bay. (Actually the discussion went more like this: Not realizing the late hour, Marty had made a midnight call to Conly to introduce himself. Conly,



© Bob Grace

wakened from a deep sleep, answered: “I have no intention of selling my property. Now if you’ll just let me get back to bed, I’ll promise to give Cypress Grove to Audubon Canyon Ranch.”

Clifford had become impressed with ACR’s efforts to protect important tidelands along the bay, and a relationship began. In 1976 he officially announced his intention to leave his beautiful shoreline property to Audubon Canyon Ranch for its conservation science programs and to be preserved in perpetuity. “I think there lies here in the future the possibility for educational purposes,” he said. “It’s nice to think that, rather than having a house torn down and a lot of little condominiums put up, a little historic house will remain and will be savored by future generations.” In 1992, Clifford completed his gift and Cypress Grove Research Center became the headquarters for

ACR’s conservation science programs.

Other strategic acquisitions along the shoreline of Tomales Bay were accomplished by Marty Griffin and his cohorts at Audubon Canyon Ranch, assuring that there could never be a freeway along the East shore of Tomales Bay. Among them is a 26-acre parcel adjoining Cypress Grove to the north containing fresh and salt water habitat in the delta of Cerini Creek. This was named the Livermore Marsh, in memory of Caroline Livermore on her death in 1968. The Livermore Family helped fund the acquisition.

**Bouverie Preserve**

A number of years after Cypress Grove, came the Bouverie Preserve in Sonoma County. David Bouverie, a London-architect-turned-Sonoma-County-landowner, cared deeply for his oak and wildflower-studded land and was enthusiastic about ACR’s education programs.

He wanted his property to be used to educate and inspire children to appreciate nature. The education programs that had taught thousands of schoolchildren at the Martin Griffin Preserve were duplicated at the Bouverie Preserve, and soon Bay Area students and trained Bouverie Docents were walking the trails and studying native plants and animals. The 500-acre Bouverie Preserve was transferred to ACR in a planned giving arrangement when David Bouverie died.

**Modini Mayacamas Preserve**

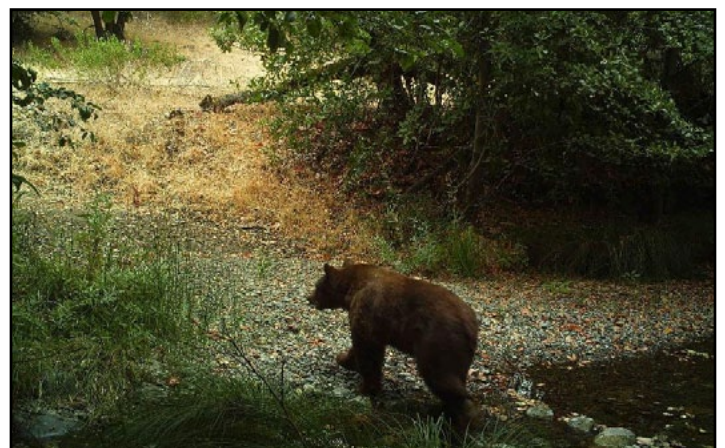
The most recent land to enter the ACR “family” of preserves is the 3,370-acre Modini Mayacamas Preserve, a pair of properties along a rugged spine of mountains running north of Mount St. Helena between Lake County and Sonoma County. It is home to black



*David Bouverie*

bears and mountain lions, rare plants, numerous species of birds, natural springs, and dramatic waterfalls. This is ACR’s fourth and largest nature preserve.

The two properties were acquired separately. The 1,725-acre Modini Ranch, tended by the family since 1857, came to ACR in 2013 as the Modini Ingalls Ecological Preserve. Just prior, in May 2012, ACR acquired the adjacent 1,620-acre Mayacamas Mountains Audubon Sanctuary from the National Audubon Society. The two properties are now collectively known as the Modini



*Audubon Canyon Ranch*

*A black bear was captured on a motion-sensor camera at the Modini Preserve in 2012.*

Mayacamas Preserves.

As Jim Modini said (and perhaps something similar could be said about all of the ACR preserves):

“Maybe if younger people hear about what we have tried to do here, they will be inspired to help us save a place for the animals, too. There is so much development, and you can’t put that back. But up here, with our ranch surrounded by other protected lands, the wildlife has a chance.”

**Save the Date:** *Marin Conservation League’s 15<sup>th</sup> Walk Into (Conservation) History will be Saturday, May 3, 9:30 a.m. at Old St. Hilary’s in Tiburon.*

*MCL welcomes your suggestions for future Walks - email us at [mcl@marin-conservationleague.org](mailto:mcl@marin-conservationleague.org).*

*Not an MCL member? Join Marin’s most effective advocate for Marin’s natural places and receive advance notice of Walks Into (Conservation) History, reduced prices on our Business-Environment Breakfasts, invitations to our summer picnic and holiday party, our bi-monthly Newsletter and advance notice and analysis of pending issues that affect our County. Join at [marinconservationleague.org](http://marinconservationleague.org), or call 415-485-6257. Memberships start at only \$35 per year.*

## These **Walks Into (Conservation) History** have been made possible by sponsors of Marin Conservation League’s “75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration”

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# NOTES