

GEORGE MCKEGNEY: THE MAN WHOSE WORK WAS PLAY

By Susan Cluff

McKegney Green near Blackie's Pasture was just a mud flat on the bay until 1965 when Caltrans contractors dumped fill along the shore to prepare for a four lane highway, intending to build all the way to San Rafael Ave. After public opinion halted the highway at Trestle Glen, the City turned the rocky windswept meadow into a sports field for local youth in 1976, naming it for the late George McKegney, one of the Town's first Parks Commissioners. Today it is one of the most beautiful spots in the Bay Area for youth sports and picnicking.

George McKegney (1910-1971) was an avid hiker and naturalist -- according to past mayor and Tiburon Historian Bran Fanning, the City's "go to" guy whenever anyone needed to know anything about trails and open space on the Tiburon Peninsula. After retiring from public works at the Tiburon Navy Net Depot in 1957, George ran youth groups after school and took local kids on summer camping trips. George, his wife Betty and son Lowell lived on Vistazo East in Old Tiburon where they kept two goats, several six toed cats and a series of beagle type dogs.

Most days after school was over, George would head off in his van to pick up small groups of kids from grades 1-3, getting them home in time for supper and homework. "We go to parks and museums, we've been from the top of Mount Tam to Stinson Beach, play ball and hide and go seek, we climb trees..." George told the Marin IJ in November 1965. "It's amazing how many of my boys hadn't climbed trees before they joined the group." George often acted like a big kid himself, most of his trips finished with a stop for ice cream.

When not planning or leading adventures, George was on the board of the Boyd Junior Museum (now Wildcare) in San Rafael, and served on the first Tiburon Parks & Recreation Commission. Looking back at newspaper records, George's name shows up again and again -- taking part in community events, building booths for school carnivals, volunteering at Tiburon Thrift Shop, was President of Tiburon Property Owner's Group, and President of Southern Marin Recreational Club (now Tiburon Peninsula Club). Sadly, George suffered a heart attack and died at the age of 60. But he was not forgotten.

In 1976, the City named the new sports green for the late George McKegney, "who dedicated a major portion of his life to the youth of the Tiburon Community." A year later, the park's dedication was attended by dozens of community supporters, his wife, Betty, the town Librarian, son Lowell, and many of George's boys and girls.

In 2018-19, McKegney Green was upgraded and renovated at a cost of \$2 million (including \$400,000 from private donors) and reopened again for community, athletic and recreational use.



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"The Tradition Starts With You."

Above: George McKegney shows youngsters how to climb a tree on a 1965 outing.

Right: In 1965 fill from highway excavation was dumped along the shore creating the future sports field.

Far Right: Today, McKegney Green is an idyllic place for youth sports and picnicking.



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