

# Marin's 13 Most Influential

Those whose efforts resulted in Marin, being Marin

BY JIM WOOD



Influence, like pornography, is hard to define, but you know it when you see it. Below are the people who I think are the most influential individuals in Marin County's 160-year history. The selection process was subjective and, like history itself, imperfect. I intended to name 12 people, but ended up with 13. The following books helped me greatly in compiling this list: *New Guardians of the Golden Gate*, Amy Meyer (University of California Press, 2006); *Marin, a History*, Barry Spitz (Potrero Meadow Publishing, 2006); and *Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast*, L. Martin Griffin (Sweetwater Springs Press, 2000).

**1. William Kent** (1864-1928) Yale educated, settled in Marin 1907; was an environmentalist (saved Muir Woods); a developer (Kentfield) and three-term congressman (Progressive Republican). He was a friend of John Muir, responsible for much of Marin's open space, and helped create Mount Tamalpais State Park.

**2. William Richardson** (1795-1856) Born in London, arrived in California 1822, became a Mexican citizen, changed his name to Guillermo, married daughter of the Presidio's

commander, was granted 20,000-acre Rancho Saucelito in south Marin; considered the area's first settler; namesake of Richardson Bay.

**3. John Reed** (1805-1843) Marin's first non-Hispanic landowner, also married a daughter of Presidio leader. Started first ferry to San Francisco; was granted the 8,900-acre Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio; had homes in Sausalito and Mill Valley; died at 38.

**4. Gary Giacomini** (1939- ) Born in Marin, served 24 years as county supervisor; helped establish "three corridor" planning concept; 20 years on Golden Gate Bridge District board; ten years on Coastal Commission; helped found Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) and Marin Community Foundation (is now chair of MCF).

**5. Barbara Boxer** (1940- ) Brooklyn-born, came to Marin in 1968 and led opposition to Russian River water, effectively limiting growth. County supervisor (1976-1982); helped establish West Marin's restrictive zoning; represented Marin/California in Congress and the Senate for past 24 years.

**6. George Lucas** (1944- ) Recently named by *The Atlantic* as the 12th most influential living American (between the Rev. Billy Graham and Michael Jordan); moved to Marin in 1969; started Lucasfilm (1971) and *Industrial Light and Magic* (1975); filmed *Star Wars*; built 4,700-acre Skywalker Ranch in West Marin.

**7. Caroline Livermore** (1885-1968) Vassar educated, mother of five; moved to Ross in 1930; helped found Marin Conservation League, Audubon Society, and Art and Garden Center; promoted Marin's first countywide plan and four state parks, including Angel Island, where Mount Livermore is named for her.

**8. L. Martin Griffin** (1920- ) Medical doctor; moved to Marin after World War II; in 1960s

and '70s helped establish Audubon Canyon Ranch and wildlife sanctuaries along the Bolinas Lagoon, Tomales Bay and Richardson Bay; wrote *Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast*.

**9. Phyllis Faber** (1927- ) and **Ellen Straus** (1927-2002) Often mentioned together as founders of Marin Agricultural Land Trust, which since 1980 has raised more than \$31 million for preservation of 38,000 acres of West Marin as farm and ranch land.

**10. Doug Maloney** (1933- ) Attorney; won lawsuit that enabled Meryl Buck's gift of millions to the San Francisco Foundation for "Marin's needy" to continue benefitting Marin; led to Marin Community Foundation's formation, which now has \$1.1 billion in assets.

**11. Vera Schultz** (1902-1995) County's first female and first college-educated supervisor; championed a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed civic center, having a county planning director, the redevelopment of Marin City, and the preservation of Richardson Bay.

**12. Dietrich Stroeth** (1936- ) Marin Municipal Water District's general manager during the nearly disastrous drought of 1976-77: imposed severe rationing; considered towing icebergs from Chile before installing a pipeline across the Richmond Bridge to end the 25-month-long ordeal.

**13. Beth Ashley** (1924- ) For over 30 years—with time-outs for writing assignments in Washington DC, USSR, and China—human interest columnist for the *Marin Independent Journal*; considered by many to be the "soul of Marin County."

That's my "baker's dozen" point of view. What's yours? Any additions, subtractions, or corrections?

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