

The Clear Print

The San Diego Tracking Team Newsletter



In December, the SDTT lost a dear friend and dedicated volunteer, Betsy Brack, to pancreatic cancer. This issue of the Clear Print is dedicated to her.

Thanks, Betsy: A Tribute to a Tracking Buddy

By Gary Seiser

So what do you say when someone you enjoy and care about passes on? In Betsy Brack's case what I say is "*Thanks, Betsy. Thanks for the memories, and most of all, thanks for the lessons.*"

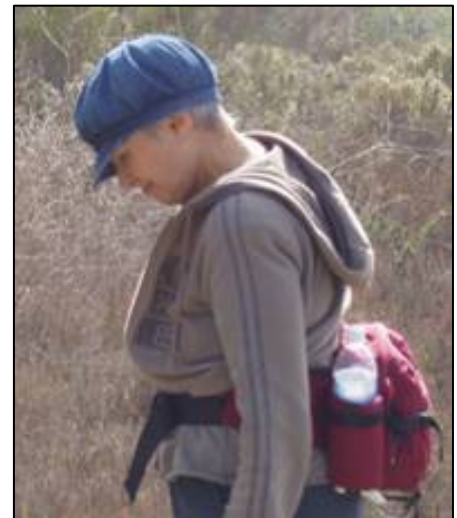
I first met Betsy at SDTT and LPTT classes and events. She was funny, quirky, and a little bit off the wall. I immediately liked her. I didn't think of her as a great tracker, but she made me laugh, and that's worth a lot. I got to know her a lot better when we started preparing for the first Track and Sign Evaluation to be held in San Diego in February 2006.

The track and sign eval was a big deal. The man himself, Mark Elbroch, the only Senior Tracker Evaluator in North America, was going to evaluate 10 of us for CyberTracker Conservation out of Cape Town, South Africa. We were scared and excited, and we wanted to be ready, so Barry Martin started doing "dirt time" practices, teaching us and helping us grow in our track and sign



alertness and knowledge. They were great sessions.

As we practiced, I started realizing that although Betsy didn't speak up a lot, when she did tell us what she thought something was, or when she told me on the side, she was often correct. She knew a heck of a lot more than people realized. I encouraged her to speak up more, and to believe in herself. She returned the favor and became a "tracking buddy." That mutual support and friendship continued throughout the evaluation. So what lessons did I gain from that?



"Trackers come in all types." I've trained and tracked with a wide range of people. They're not all like Ruth Ann Colby-Martin, who got married in a deer skin dress she made herself, or Juliet Hendershott, who spends more time on a horse than on the ground. And they're not all like Mark Elbroch and Barry Martin, each of whom are completely at home in the out-of-doors and have forgotten more about tracking and nature than I will ever know. Trackers come in all types. They're people like you and I, and they're people like Betsy. God bless us all.

"Difference is dynamic, and funny can be cool." If we only hang out with people who are just like we are, how boring would life be? Instead, if we fill our lives with different, funny people, life can be so full. You should have seen Betsy with Mike Kresky at the evaluation. They were a comedy show together. Talk about two different, funny people who were absolutely a riot. I treasure those memories.

"Believe in yourself, and in others." Some people were surprised when Betsy earned her Track and Sign I certification, and when she completed the apprentice program to become a "Tracker" within the SDTT. Not me. I believed in her, and she believed in herself. That's important for all of us to remember. We need to show that belief to our children, our friends, and to ourselves.

"You're never too old to learn" isn't just a saying, it's a truism. When making the awards at the end of the evaluation, Mark Elbroch inquired politely if he could ask Betsy how old she was. She smiled and said, "72." Mark responded that she was the oldest person in the world to earn Track and Sign I. You're never too old to learn.



"Enjoy life, enjoy learning, enjoy people."

No one was prouder and happier with their achievement at our track and sign evaluation than Betsy. Did she make Track and Sign III? No. Track and Sign II? No. She made Track and Sign I, and she was absolutely delighted.

I'll miss Betsy, but I won't forget her. And as I take the next Track and Sign evaluation in March 2007, I know I'm going to feel her watching over my shoulder, smiling and urging me on. Who knows, she might even help me. Thanks, Betsy.

In Memory of Betsy

As word of Betsy's passing spread via e-mail, I was touched by what people wrote, so I'm sharing these messages here.

I really enjoyed working with Betsy; she was an inspiration to us all especially when she became a certified tracker at age 72. She knew how to live life to the fullest and she could tackle a goal with a stubborn, resoluteness that was jaw-dropping. We'll miss her, God's speed to her!

--Barry Martin

She was so full of life. I'm so sorry to get this news. I'll always think of her when I'm tracking with SDTT. I hope her family knows how many lives she touched.

--Tylene Williford

I'll always remember Betsy as a firey, determined woman with A LOT of energy and spunk. She will be missed by many.

--Betty Kirchhevel

I am so sad to hear about Betsy. She had spunk and is an inspiration. From now on when I start whining about what I believe to be as some age-related obstacle, I will fondly think of Betsy and the enthusiasm and curiosity she brought into tracking!

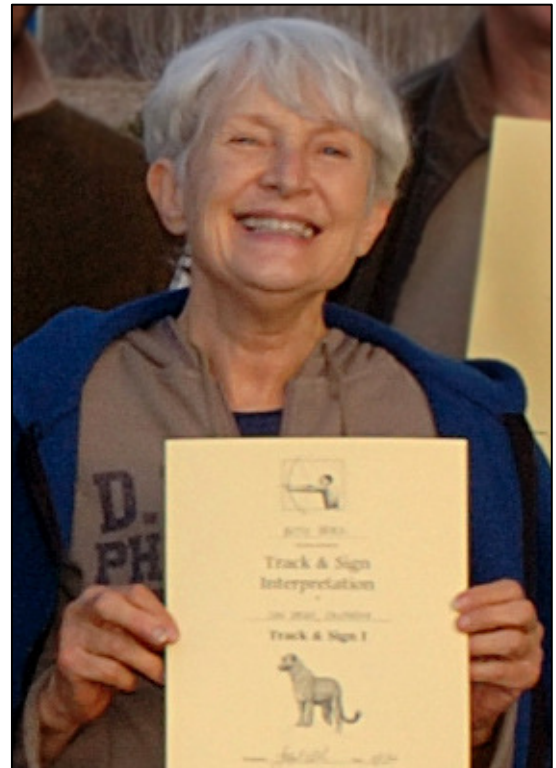
--Duane Boney

At Mission Trails Regional Park, we were fortunate to have Betsy serve as both a Trail Guide and Leader of our Tracking Team. Her passion and enthusiasm for tracking were always contagious and inspiring. She was truly a free spirit, whose spunk and laughter will never be forgotten.

--Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

As I'm reading all the great things people have to say about Betsy and especially her inspiration to many of us, I think it might be nice to capture all these thoughts in one place. Maybe we use them as part of a memorial on the SDTT website, at one of our events or whatever, but I would really hate for us to eventually forget all these great words and thoughts about someone we admired that much.

--Rick Botta



I only knew Betsy for less than two years. We shared the same Trail Guide training class at MTRP and we soon became good hiking buddies. She would get mildly irritated at me because I didn't walk fast enough. I'm a birder and this slowed us down. We certainly enjoyed our outings together as I taught her the art of birding and she taught me the art of tracking. We will all miss this unique and courageous individual. May the tracks in the trail ahead lead her to a better place.

--Jeanne Raimond

To Betsy: Thank you for your inspiration and for demonstrating what it means to stand up for one's beliefs. As a devotee to the natural world and the human spirit, you were able to share an amazing accumulation of life experiences each time we walked the trails at Crestridge Ecological Reserve, Mission Trails Regional Park and more. Again, thank you for the gifts you have left behind.

--Karen LG

Tracking didn't come easily for Betsy, but she pursued it with a passion that was an inspiration to me, and her persistence was rewarded. She shared with me her love for the theater, animals in general, and especially her daughter. She was an energetic and positive individual who survived breast cancer (twice), and she was a good friend. She lived life to the fullest. I wish I could have known her better.

--Lani Noreke

It was really "rad" meeting and tracking with someone as excited about tracking as Betsy was. Her ego wasn't tied around where she was positioned in the tracking world. She was an innocent, a spreader of goodness. I was really stoked to learn she helped start "Dance Away" decades ago in Santa Barbara, which is a no smoking, no drinking, no drugs, dancing place for families and others who just love dancing. It's still part of the Santa Barbara community today. So I'll miss her, but not in the way of like feeling grief, because I'm stoked about what she left and how she lived, she lived beyond herself and left a legacy of good things.

--Mike Kresky

Infectious and authentic curiosity and enthusiasm, and an inspiration to us all in studying tracking skills, and living. May we all continue to learn, to challenge ourselves, and follow our passions and interests until our dying day. I'll miss her when we next evaluate trackers in San Diego, and the opportunity to see her tracking skills continue to flourish. Perhaps they still will.

--Mark Elbroch



Betsy – when I first met her she seemed a bit ditzy, but as I got to know her and we became good friends on the trail, I realized she, like many of us, has a facade we show others. Every time we spoke or tracked or dined, I kept learning more and more about her. Betsy was incredibly special. It took some of us a while to figure that out, but eventually we all did! She touched my soul and changed my life.

--Ann Hunt

Scholarship Opportunity

In Betsy's name, Gary Seiser is sponsoring a one-time scholarship to the Tracker/Naturalist series that starts in March. If anyone knows of anyone who they would like to have considered, please forward their names to me (lani.noreke@sdt.org) along with a few sentences about why that person is deserving. Need is a factor, but most important for this scholarship will be spirit and an interest in tracking and nature awareness.

Upcoming Events

The **Winter Wildlife Survey** period begins January 20 (transect schedule will be sent to SDTTLIST at that time), and the **Fall/Winter Deer Scat Collection** period is underway. Plenty of volunteer opportunities remain for both. If you are interested in helping with any of these activities, or if you have any questions, please e-mail Lani at lani.noreke@sdt.org.

Cancelled: Friday, January 19: Speaker Series

Friday, January 19: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset at MTRP Old Mission Dam Parking Lot. Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Saturday, January 20: Winter Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training, 9:45 am to 4:00 pm at the Ranch House in Peñasquitos Canyon.

Friday, January 26: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset. Contact Barry for location (619 892 7620). Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Saturday, January 27: Annual meeting, (mandatory for board members, optional for everyone else) 6:00 PM at Karen Larsen Gordon's house. Refreshments will be served. If you plan to attend this meeting and are not a board member, please let Karen know (858 485 5077).

Friday, February 2: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset. Contact Barry for location (619 892 7620). Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Saturday, February 3: Evaluation workshop, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, meet at the Ranch House, bring a bag lunch, and be prepared to carpool. Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series, not just those who will be participating in the evaluation. \$40 fee.

Friday, February 9: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset. Contact Barry for location (619 892 7620). Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Saturday, February 10: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Friday, February 16: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset. Contact Barry for location (619 892 7620). Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Friday, February 23: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset. Contact Barry for location (619 892 7620). Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24: Advanced Tracker Naturalist Class, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Friday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday at the Ranch House. \$50 fee. Contact Rick Botta (858-672-0584, registration@sdt.org) to sign up as a student or to help out.

Friday, March 2: Dirt Time with Barry, 3:00 p.m. until sunset. Contact Barry for location (619 892 7620). Open to those who have completed the Tracker/Naturalist series. \$5 donation requested.

Saturday, March 3 and Sunday, March 4: Tracker Evaluation (full)

Saturday, March 10: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Thursday, March 22 and Saturday, March 24: Beginning Tracker Naturalist Class, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Friday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday at the Ranch House. \$50 fee. Contact Rick Botta (858-672-0584, registration@sdt.org) to sign up as a student or to help out.

Saturday, April 7: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Saturday, April 14: SDTT Recognition Event, save the date. More info to come.

Did you get a newsletter and membership application in the mail? If not, we might not have your current address—please contact Lani to update your info.

The 2007 Donor Membership drive is underway. Are you a donor member of the SDTT? Don't forget, you can help support SDTT in two important ways—volunteer your time and/or contribute financially by becoming a donor member. Call 760-715-4102 to volunteer and go to www.sdt.org for a membership form if you don't already have one.

Please send submissions to the Clear Print to Lani Noreke at lani.noreke@sdt.org.