

Daly City Library & Recreation Services
Active Adult/Senior Services
presents



Current Events with Frank Damon

Doelger Senior Center has been fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 6 years. During this time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. Starting on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 1:30 pm Frank will offer Current Events discussion groups each Monday on ZOOM.

Daly City Active Adult/Senior Services invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Current Events with Frank Damon

Time: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm every Monday

Join Zoom meeting with following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87222786510?pwd=d0VucFhGYzhMMXVhSUNJTmdFWDNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 872 2278 6510

Passcode: 724368

Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

If you are interested in joining *Current Events with Frank Damon*, please go to www.dalycityseniors.org/current-events or contact Frank directly at frankdamon@my.smccd.edu.

Man in the News

He is a Russian politician and anti corruption activist. He is also the leader of the opposition party called Russia of the Future. For more than a decade, he has protested against unfair deals between Russia's government and its largest businesses, and has led many protests against United Russia, the country's largest political party, and is an outspoken critic of President Putin. These protests have landed him in jail on numerous occasions.

He wanted to run against Vladimir Putin in the 2018 election, but Russia's Supreme Court barred him from the race. Millions of people follow me on YouTube and Twitter. Last August, he was poisoned by a nerve agent and almost died during an airplane flight. After recovering in Germany, he flew back to Moscow on January 17th, and was immediately arrested when my plane landed.



Who am I? (Alexei Navalny.)

Seagrass: “the forgotten ecosystem”

Seagrasses are a hugely important but understudied part of our underwater ecosystems. Looking at the map here, where are most seagrasses found? (In shallow waters near continental coastlines.) Seagrasses are often confused with seaweeds, but seagrasses are much more like the flowering plants found on land. They have complex root systems, leaves, veins, and produce flowers and seeds. Today, there are a total of 72 different seagrass species—belonging to four major groups—that grow in oceans around the world. While often overlooked, these plants are a vital part of life on Earth and could play a major role in the fight against climate change. Like plants that grow on land, seagrasses use energy from the sun to convert carbon dioxide and water into food for growth. What is this process called? (Photosynthesis.) Seagrasses also generate oxygen through this process. One square meter of seagrass produces 10 liters of oxygen per day. For this reason, seagrasses have been given the nickname “lungs of the sea.” In addition to oxygen production, seagrasses also help the environment in other ways. They prevent erosion on coastlines and provide habitats for a wide range of undersea animals. Seagrasses help remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in a process called carbon sequestration even more efficiently than rainforests. Scientists are hopeful they can use seagrass to help limit the effects of climate change caused by carbon emissions. Why do you think seagrasses remain an understudied ecosystem?

Seagrass: “the forgotten ecosystem”



■ Seagrass habitat



“If we invest in seagrasses, they can help us in lowering the global concentration of carbon dioxide”
— Jonathan Lefcheck, a research scientist at the Smithsonian’s Environmental Research Center.

Photo: Sofia Sarlogurska

Unfortunately, while seagrasses are a vital part of life on Earth, many human activities are putting these important plants at risk. Scientific studies have shown that the world's global seagrass coverage is being lost at a rate of 1.5 percent per year. This is equivalent to losing around two football fields worth of seagrass per hour. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, or IUCN, estimates that one-quarter of the world's seagrass is endangered or vulnerable to extinction. What do threats to seagrass have in common? (They are the result of human activities.) While natural events can affect and damage seagrasses, human activities and pollution are the primary cause for the loss of seagrass in recent decades.

Fertilizers and other pollution that end up in oceans can cause algae blooms that block seagrasses from accessing sunlight. Construction and agriculture can cause sediment to cover seagrasses, which smothers them. One of the biggest threats to seagrass is climate change. Rising water temperatures make it harder for seagrasses to adapt. And severe storms caused by climate change can destroy entire meadows of seagrass. Commercial fishing can disrupt the balance of life in natural ecosystems. Seagrasses play an important role in the lives of many animals, like the sea turtle shown here, but overfishing can remove small fish that help protect seagrasses by keeping them clean. What do you think should be done to protect seagrasses globally?

Seagrass under threat

The main threats to seagrass include:

- fertilizers and pollution
- boat anchors and propellers
- disease
- rising water temperatures
- overfishing



Many species rely on seagrasses for survival



Photo: Alberto Romeo, CC BY-SA 2.5

While there has been no international laws passed to protect seagrass habitats, local conservation groups and government agencies are working hard to protect these ecosystems.

What do you think are the best ways to help seagrasses recover? Experts say the best way to protect seagrasses is to lessen the impact of human activities on our oceans. Limiting pollution, carbon emissions, and harmful commercial fishing practices would all help protect endangered seagrasses. In addition to limiting harmful human activities, experts are also looking for other ways to increase seagrass coverage. On the screen, you see two ways conservation groups are working to restore seagrass habitats. What is happening in these photos? (On the left, a conservation group monitors the health of seagrass habitats using special equipment, and on the right, a diver transports adult seagrass to a new habitat.) In the U.S. the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences has been working for years to restore seagrass habitats in the Chesapeake Bay. As of 2014, they had reseeded over 456 acres with over 7.65 million seagrass seeds. These efforts have led to better water quality and more diverse marine wildlife in the area. And while efforts are being made to protect seagrasses, Scientists warn that these plants are still threatened. Experts say individuals can help the effort to protect seagrass by not littering, avoiding the use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers, and by supporting conservation efforts.

The fight to save seagrass



Experts use special underwater equipment to study seagrass ecosystems.

"I'm pitching seagrasses as an ally in climate change. They are an incredible ecosystem that continue to provide a wealth of benefits to humanity."

—Jonathan Lefcheck, research scientist



A diver working to restore seagrass.

President Biden starts term with executive orders

As a candidate for president, Joe Biden often talked about what he would do on “Day One” of his presidency. Last Wednesday, after being sworn in as the 46th U.S. president, Biden went directly to the White House to sign more than a dozen executive orders. What is an executive order? (A federal directive for how the executive branch should interpret and enforce laws.) While these orders will not override any federal or state laws, they will immediately change government policies, and overturn some of Donald Trump’s executive orders. Biden used executive orders to fulfill his pledge that the U.S. would rejoin the Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization. Do you know who Biden chose to head the U.S. delegation to WHO? (Dr. Anthony Fauci.)

With another executive order, Biden rescinded Trump’s immigration restrictions on the five Muslim-majority nations shown here; later, he is expected to start the process of getting the U.S. back on board with the Iran nuclear agreement. And Biden made environmentalists happy — and infuriated oil companies and Canadian officials — by canceling the permit for the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Two other orders continued the pause on student loan payments during the pandemic and the moratorium on evictions and foreclosures. What does “moratorium” mean? (Prohibition.) In another sharp break with Trump-era policies, Biden also set up a national mask mandate for federal buildings and interstate travelers. Will this cause a huge reduction in coronavirus infections, or is it more of a symbolic gesture?

President Biden starts term with executive orders

ON DAY ONE:

- Rejoin Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization
- End immigration restrictions on Muslim countries
- Cancel Keystone XL pipeline
- Extend pause on student loan payments and evictions
- Federal mask mandate



President Biden went on to sign many more executive orders last week. One of them was to revamp the government's COVID-19 testing and vaccine plan. With another executive action, he instructed his Cabinet members to prioritize aid and relief to Americans who have been hit hardest by the cratering of the economy due to the pandemic. As a senator, Biden was in favor of increasing sentences for those who sold and used illegal drugs. What was the name for this national movement that led to mass incarceration for these crimes? (The "War on Drugs.") But he now wants to revamp the U.S. justice system in many ways, including eliminating jail sentences for non-violent drug users. Do you think his son Hunter's drug addiction has given him a new perspective on this issue? Biden has spoken about the need to support ex-prisoners once they are released. He can address some criminal justice issues through executive orders. But Biden has rejected the idea of using these orders to spur police reform, because he wants to get Congress to pass national laws about this topic.

The president is also using his power to change direction on both immigration and the environment. He has ordered Immigration and Customs Enforcement to immediately work on reuniting immigrant children and their parents who had been separated upon entering the U.S. Biden will also be using executive actions to reverse many of the more than 100 environmental rollbacks during Trump's presidency.

ON DAYS TWO, THREE, and BEYOND:

- Revamp national COVID-19 response
- Economic relief
- New criminal justice policies
- Reuniting separated families
- Reverse environmental rollbacks



Photo: Konstantin "KVentz" Ventslavovich, CCASA-Lic. 4.0



Detainees in McAllen, Texas

Photo: U.S. Office of Customs and Border Patrol

Tower of London “queen” raven goes missing

Here you see the historic Tower of London. The tower was built in the 11th century, when William the Conqueror invaded England and ordered a fortress to be built on the banks of the Thames River. Over the centuries, the tower complex has served as a palace, a mint, an armory, a prison, and even a zoo. Today, the Tower of London serves as a museum and repository for the crown jewels. The tower has also been home to a series of legendary ravens for over 300 years. Over 3 million tourists visit the landmark every year to see the famous birds and castle.

The tower’s ravens are more than just a tourist attraction; they are part of an ancient British legend. This legend says that if the tower loses its ravens, it will crumble along with the kingdom. The ravens are sheltered in large aviaries on the grounds, but they are also able to fly short distances. The flight feathers on one wing are kept clipped to keep them from wandering too far away. Sadly, one of the ravens went missing recently. Merlina was known as the “queen” raven at the tower. The ravenmaster, who tends to the birds, reported Merlina missing several weeks ago. Now only seven ravens remain at the tower. While everyone misses Merlina, the tower began a raven breeding program years ago, and is hopeful the queen raven can be replaced by one of the chicks in the program.

Tower of London "queen" raven goes missing

"Merlina was our undisputed ruler of the roost, queen of the Tower ravens. She will be greatly missed by her fellow ravens, the ravenmaster, and all of us in the Tower community."

— *Tower of London spokesperson.*



Ravens are very closely related to crows, and many people have a hard time telling them apart. Do you know how they differ? Ravens are much heavier than crows, with a larger wingspan. Ravens have longer hooked beaks, and display hair-like feathers on their throats. They also prefer solitude and quiet, as opposed to crows, which can live in louder environments. Crows like to vocalize as they flap their wings, making their distinctive “cawww” sound; ravens tend to glide silently, and their natural call is a throaty “brawwk.” Do you think you’ve ever seen a raven, or do you just see crows where you live? Ravens and crows are members of the Corvidae — KOHR-vih-dye — family, along with jackdaws, jays, magpies, nutcrackers, and several others. Corvids are among the most intelligent birds in the world. The bird family that includes parrots are also considered highly intelligent. Not only do corvids use tools, they often invent their own. Crows also have incredible memories, and are able to remember human faces for years. The Eurasian magpie shown here can recognize itself in a mirror. Researchers know this because when they put a colored sticker under the bird’s beak and it sees its reflection, it tries to take the sticker off. Magpies conduct funerals for their dead friends and family members, gathering near the body and laying down clumps of grass next to it. Corvids also use their creativity to invent games for their own amusement. Do you think people underestimate the intelligence and complex thinking abilities of animals?

Corvids are among the most intelligent birds.

- They can make their own tools to get food.
- Crows remember individual human faces.
- Magpies can recognize themselves in mirrors.
- Corvids make up and play their own games — just for fun.



Country of the Week: Panama

Where is Panama located? (Central America.) Panama is bordered to the west by Costa Rica and to the east by Colombia. To the north and the south, it has miles of coastline along two different oceans. What are they? (The Pacific and the Atlantic.) The western part of the country contains part of the Cordillera de Talamanca, a long mountain range that Panama shares with Costa Rica. The eastern half of the country contains part of the Darién Gap, a rainforest that is sometimes seen as the area that separates North and South America. The center of the country is best-known for the Panama Canal. What do you know about this canal? The Panama Canal is an artificial waterway that allows boats to pass from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean without having to sail around the southern tip of South America. It is one of the largest and most famous canals in the world and its construction is seen as a major feat of engineering. In 1994, it was named one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World. Panama City is the capital and largest city. About 40 percent of Panama's population lives there. This old urban area now has many skyscrapers, most of which were built within the last decade. Wealth generated by the Panama Canal fuels Panama City's banks, which in turn fuel the entire country's economy. This money makes Panama one of the richest countries in Central America. However, the wealth is unevenly distributed, and many of its people—including about 86 percent of its indigenous population—live in poverty. Laurentino Cortizo has been the president of Panama since 2019.



Indigenous people have resided in Panama for many thousands of years. The first European to set foot in Panama was the explorer and conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who arrived there in 1513. Balboa is seen as a major figure in Panamanian history, and Panama's currency and largest shipping port are named for him. After Balboa's arrival, Spain ruled over Panama until 1821, when Panama became part of Colombia. Panamanians had tried many times to gain independence from Colombia, but they had been unsuccessful until the U.S. and France chose to build the Panama Canal. These countries decided to help Panama become independent, so they could construct the canal. In 1903, they signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, which declared Panama's independence. Do you think the U.S. and France had a right to do this? After this treaty was ratified, the U.S. sent warships to Panama, and Colombia gave up its claim on the country. In 1983, Manuel Noriega became the leader of Panama.

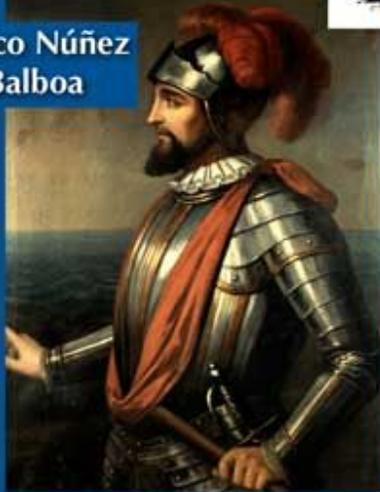
Noriega was a cruel dictator, but he had the support of the U.S. for much of his rule. By 1989, though, Noriega's relationship with the U.S. had soured, and the CIA helped to depose him. In 2011, Noriega was sent to prison for drug-related crimes committed while he was in office, and he died in jail in 2017. Mariano Rivera is a famous baseball player from Panama. Baseball is Panama's national sport, and more than 140 Panamanians have played in the MLB. Rivera is considered one of the best pitchers of all time, and in 2019 he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.



Manuel Noriega



Vasco Núñez de Balboa



Mariano Rivera

Photo: Keith Allison, CC BY-SA 2.0

Remember When...

Betty White, one of the most beloved actresses in television history, recently celebrated her 99th birthday. Who wants to read the quote here about how she spent the day? White is well known for two iconic TV roles: as Sue Ann Niven on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” and as Rose Nylund on “The Golden Girls.” Do you remember her on these shows? Betty White’s TV career has been going on for more than 80 years, making her the person who has worked the longest in this industry. Let’s look back on her long career. Betty White began her career in a very unusual way. She was born in Illinois in 1922. When the Great Depression broke out, her family — like so many others at that time — moved to California. As a girl, Betty loved animals so much that she wanted to be a zookeeper or a park ranger. When she learned that the U.S. Forest Service was not hiring women as rangers, she turned her attention toward the arts — and the rest is history. But she never lost her attachment to animals, and became a lifelong advocate for their safety and protection. What does her devotion to animals tell you about the kind of person she is?

During World War Two, Betty worked for the American Women’s Voluntary Services war support organization. Do you remember what kinds of things people volunteered for during that war? She would also hang around radio and TV studios looking for any work that would help pay the rent. In 1949, she became Al Jarvis’ sidekick on a variety show called “Hollywood on Television.” This show aired six days a week, and each program lasted five and a half hours. Jarvis left the show in 1952, but Betty continued this grueling schedule all by herself for four years. Every day, she would just talk to the camera, read letters from friends, welcome guests, perform skits, and sing at least three songs. TV historians actually consider Betty White the host of the nation’s first real talk show. Do you remember any early talk shows on TV? Did you have a favorite? She also developed a syndicated sitcom called “Life With Elizabeth” and filmed commercials for many different products. When these projects ended, Betty White was a popular guest star on game shows. She ended up marrying Allen Ludden, the longtime host of “Password,” in 1963. This marriage, her third, lasted for 18 years until Ludden’s death in 1981. Mary Tyler Moore personally chose her to play Sue Ann Nivens, a role for which she won two Emmy Awards. Do you remember what this character did on the show? (She came on the news show to do “The Happy Homemaker” segments, but acted very differently when the cameras were off.) After this show ended, Betty searched for a new project that could showcase her abilities. She found that role on “The Golden Girls” playing Rose Nylund. This extremely naïve character was raised in St. Olaf, Minnesota, and was always telling stories about family members such as Uncle Inkeblotter or Great Grandpa Ziggy.

In more recent years, Betty White has played a landlady on “Hot in Cleveland,” hosted a senior-themed prank show called “Off Their Rockers,” and appeared in several popular films. Seven years ago, she became the oldest person to host “Saturday Night Live.” She has also continued her efforts to protect animals — so much so that the U.S. Forest Service made her an honorary park ranger. Her newest project is overseeing the re-release of “The Pet Set,” her

1970's talk show focused on celebrities and their pets. In 2011, in a Reuters poll, Betty White was chosen as the most trusted celebrity among Americans.

Remember When . . .

Betty White turns 99

"What am I doing for my birthday? Running a mile each morning has been curtailed by COVID, so I am ... feeding the two ducks who come to visit me every day."



As Sue Ann Nivens on
"The Mary Tyler Moore Show"



The cast of
"The Golden Girls"