

The San Francisco Accordion Club



World's First Accordion Club 1912-2010



Newsletter for January 2010

*The
official instrument of San
Francisco!*

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Newsletter

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Randall Hicks, Production
Editor



President's Message

The brain is the most complicated organ in the human body. Every organ has a specific and important function, of course, and the failure of any one would lead to some inconvenient consequences. But the more scientists study the brain, the more amazed they are at what it does.

What does this have to do with the accordion or music for that matter? A lot, according to Dr. Oliver Sacks who wrote a book about the brain and music. He calls his book *Musicophilia*. Sacks is a professor of neurology and psychiatry who wrote a book previous to this one, titled *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, that was made into an Oscar nominated film.

He says, "music occupies more areas of the brain than language does --humans are a musical species." He goes on to describe case histories of musicians, patients and every-day people who have had unusual experiences. In one of his true stories he de-

scribes a man who was struck by lightning and was subsequently inspired to become a concert pianist at the age of forty two.

Although the cases he tells about are fascinating, I was drawn to those that dealt with experiences similar to some I have had and with which I can identify. In his chapter called "Brainworms, Sticky Music and Catchy Tunes" he describes how a fragment of music repeats itself in our brain and just won't go away. Members of the Accordion Chamber Ensemble have talked about this many times in the past when Joe Smiell gives us a new arrangement and hours later we are still hearing it in our brains.

There are some people who hear complete works, their themes and harmonies, and then go on to transcribe them on paper. Our own Joe Smiell is one of those people and the works he hears become the beautiful arrangements we play.

The brain worms I hear are more like phrases or just a few bars

of music that just won't go away but then after a few minutes they come back to haunt me. I have even developed an association with music I would like to tell you about.

You see, my grandson gave me a stuffed toy chicken that plays the *Chicken Dance* (what else) when you clap loudly. Don't laugh! Doesn't every eighty-six year old man have a stuffed toy? Well my chicken, whom I have named "Ophilia", sits on a shelf in my computer room. I discovered that whenever I sneeze loudly, the chicken flaps its wings and plays the first eight bars of the tune--in three keys. But here is the strange part. Now whenever I am in another room, in my garden or anywhere and I sneeze, I hear in my brain "Tada tada tada ta, TA TA TA TA!"

Frank Montoro



Annual Christmas Party at SFAC!

On entry to the Oyster Point Yacht Club, you could see beautiful Christmas decorations everywhere, setting the spirit just right. Each table had a special decoration by the yacht club, and our club added some giant candy canes filled with Hershey's Kisses.

We thank **Vinny Rinaldi** for taking the initiative and playing some lovely warm-up music while the **San Francisco Accordion Band** set up and found their seats. Then the band took over and played a few numbers--until the meeting started with President **Frank Montoro's** very sad announcement that Santa couldn't be here today because he had the swine flu!

Bob Smith had a stack of DVD's of videos of our club meetings made by Ed Zaro over many years, that Bob had painstakingly burned onto DVD's one-by-one. A huge job! It took Bob many months. Bob is *donating* these DVD's to the club! What a generous donation, given the countless hours of work he put into the project. Many Kudos to Bob!



Frank Montoro, Gus Greyhosky & Bob Smith

Before the day's program began, we enjoyed a special treat: 8-year-old

Lorenzo Lucchesi, proud and enthusiastic student of **Skyler Fell**, made his debut performance by playing *Jingle Bells* for us--after playing for only 3 months! Lorenzo's heroes are Lawrence Welk and Myron Floren--wow! Nice going, Lorenzo!



Proud teacher and student!

The SF Accordion Band then played its full program, consisting of 8 Christmas pieces, representing traditional Christmas music and children's Christmas music; plus two non-Christmas pieces (*Liechtensteiner Polka* and *Five Foot Two*) and of course, *Auld Lang*

Syne. Players in the band were **Vic and Barbara Corsiglia**, **Telmo Echeverría**, **André Paris**, **Mel Schwing**, **Judy Dale**, **Randy Hicks**, **Bob Smith**, yours truly (**Val Kieser**), **Scott Williamson** and his beautiful, talented daughter **Lyndie** on string bass. Looking on proudly were Lyndie's handsome husband **Jeff** and their two precious little girls, **Nia** and **Taryn**.



The San Francisco Accordion Band

Once again **Bob Smith** played his own arrangement



Bob Smith

of the gorgeous Christmastime chorale, *How Brightly Shines the Morning Star*, based on a choral setting by J. S. Bach; and again this year we laughed along with **Lynn Ewing's** hilarious novelty pieces, *I'm Gettin' Nuttin' for Christmas*

and *The Twelve Days of Vacation* (how can she remember so flawlessly *all* the words with *all* the repetitions??)



Lynn Ewing

Break time was the perfect time to wish **Vince Cirelli** a **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!** We were so happy that **Ed Massolo** could bring Vince to the meeting (oh yes, it was also great to see **Ed and Isabelle**, whom we haven't seen in quite a long time). **Skyler Fell** had brought two delicious cakes for Vince, and Vince rose up to the occasion with a very nice few words to the club members. Adding to Vince's celebration was a visit, some words and some musical memories by **Don Garibaldi**.

Annual Christmas Party at SFAC!

Happy, happy birthday Vince from all of us in SFAC!



Birthday Boy Vince Cirelli (center) offering a word of wisdom and holiday wishes, flanked by Don Garibaldi (left) and Ed Massolo (right).

After the drawing in which Jim Holliday won a bottle of wine, the San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble (ACE) with Joe Smiell took over the rest of the afternoon with a mini-concert of its own.

Using Joe's arrangements, and conducted by Joe, the ensemble played an eclectic mix of marches, a Hungarian suite, a couple of accordion old-time favorites that I will mention below, Polish Christmas music, American Christmas music (*White Christ-*



Joe Smiell

mas), and a fairly long Scandinavian Suite that is absolutely gorgeous. Players in the ACE Ensemble were Sharon Walters Greyhosky, Marian Kelly, Nora Mazzara, Frank Montoro, Lynn Ewing, Reno Di Bono, Dave Perry, Jerry Kramer, Val Kieser, Caroline Grannan, Mary-Alice Eldon and Taylor Pedersen.

Regarding the "old-time accordion favorites" mentioned above: It seems that nearly every accordion player was weaned on *Sharpshooters March*. Well, Joe

knows how it's meant to be played, and arranged it for the ensemble as an orchestral piece, and what a sound! The other piece, of course, was *Lady of Spain*. We laughed when Joe gave it to us in the ensemble. *Lady of Spain* for orchestra? Well, I hope you were there to hear what Joe did with it. *Lady of Spain* is not a waltz—it is a *Paso Doble* written in $\frac{3}{4}$ time! (Many versions show it in $\frac{6}{8}$ time too.) And Joe knew how to bring out the *Paso Doble* so that it sounded straight out of Spain! *¡Olé!*



The San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble!

A large part of Joe's fan club was there in the persons of wife Lucy, son ED and his wife Leti, son Joseph and his wife Sally Ann, and all three Smiell grandchildren, Franz Joseph, Johann Christian, and Johannes Antonin. Franz Joseph is old enough to socialize with everyone and knock them over with his wit and brilliance.

The spirit lingered into the afterglow in the lounge. Everyone carried home some of that spirit!

Val



More Holiday Fun!



Vic Corsiglia, SF Accordion Band member (who got cut in half sitting at the far left end of the group photo)!

Another photo of Vince, with a friend and a great big smile!



Don Garibaldi performing in honor of Vince Cirelli's birthday!

Randy & Telmo making some last minute notes!



You never know what you are going to get yourself into . . .



Peter Di Bono relates a humorous experience: "This is a picture of me playing with a string ensemble of 20 players at San Francisco City Hall last month. They had a snow making machine dropping snow from the top of City Hall down onto the rotunda floor. We were told about the artificial snow before the job, but it was said that it would be dry. Well, the artificial snow was wet.

I said that I wouldn't be able to play the job and have my instrument getting wet. I was given a piece of a tablecloth which I tied around my accordion, and played the rest of the three hours over the tablecloth. It worked out all right, just a little different feel on the keys."

Welcome New Members!

Last month two new individuals and a whole family joined the club. **Elaine Cooperstein** of Oakland plays piano accordion. She like "Oldies" and European Music, and is interested in being actively involved in the club. **Diana Purucker** of Montara doesn't play, but enjoys the accordion and a wide variety of musical styles. Our young performer last month, **Lorenzo Lucchesi** joined along with his parents **Franco** and **Susan**. Lorenzo lives in San Francisco and has been studying piano accordion for just three months, with Skyler Fell.

Welcome everyone and we look forward to seeing you all again soon.

RH

The "Babes" Entertain On Christmas Eve!

German Cuisine + Accordion Music = the Perfect Christmas Eve

The locally well-known German Restaurant, **Speisekammer** on Lincoln in Alameda, was the setting for a terrific musical venue which featured 4 of the 12 Accordion BABES, from the same calendar.

First to play and sing was **Salane Schultz**, who also works as a waitress at the restaurant, when she isn't playing her accordion and making incredible music. She played several pieces, and really wowed the crowd with her rendition of the *12 Days Of Christmas*.

Amber Lee Baker played accordion and glockenspiel, and treated us to several interesting songs, one having to do with making the perfect pancake on Christmas morning. A willing audience member volunteered to accompany her on the penny whistle.

Mad Mags, aka **Maggie Martin**, treated the audience to many a fine tune, some reminiscent of sailing and pirate songs, one entitled *For The Love of Pete*,



Joan Wilson Reuter and Renée de la Prade

fiddle and **Mike Kelleher** on guitar. This trio played hot Zydeco with a Punk, Celtic, Folk edge and took turns singing lead.

The only thing better, would have been to hear a few numbers with all the musicians together.

All of the BABES have websites. See

www.squeezeboxgoddess.com, and most have CD's for sale, and play at different venues locally and far away.

Of course, last but not least, the restaurant, which always has great food and featured Roast Goose with Red Cabbage, Bread Dumplings and Brussels Sprouts, Hot Glühwein and dinner by the fireplace. They also have a full bar, and many German beers on tap, and even when crowded it is a great place to hang out and party. They have all kinds of interesting music in the evening from Thursday through Saturday. Check out their website: www.speisekammer.com, and make your reservation today!

Christina Knapp

*p.s. tell them I sent you
and I might get a free
Brussels sprout!*



Mad Mags (center) with GDub on Guitar and Johnny Blood on Tuba

which can be heard on www.themadmaggies.com. She was accompanied by kilted **GDub** playing guitar and **Johnny Blood** on the Tuba.

The final set showcased the skills of **Renée de la Prade**, and her friends, **Joan Wilson Reuter** playing

ACCORDION BABES Live Music Great Food
At **Speisekammer Restaurant**
SALANE C. SCHULTZ
RENEE DE LA PRADE
JOAN WILSON REUTER
AMBER LEE & THE ANOMALIES
MAD MAGS, GUBS & JOHNNY BLOOD
OF THE MAD MAGGIES
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miscellaneous.com
squeezeboxgoddess.com
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themadmaggies.com

December 24
Thursday 8:30PM
2424 Lincoln Ave.
Alameda
510 522-1300

Stars of the 2010 West Coast Accordion Babes Calendar & CD

Performing in January!

We are pleased to have back, by popular demand, **Tangonero** with accordionist **Alex Roitman**.



Tangonero!

Tangonero is a 4 instrument Argentine tango band (Violin, Accordion, Double Bass and Guitar) that specializes in classic Tango. They are a favorite wherever they play. For more details, you may visit their website: www.tangonero.com.

It has been well over a year, and we are glad to also have member **Mike Zampiceni** return to our stage. You will find Mike performing frequently around the Bay Area and Sunday, January 17, you can hear him at our monthly musical meeting. Also look for an informative Technique Tip article by Mike on the opposite page.



Mike Zampiceni

To conclude the program, we welcome, all the way from Seattle, **Bonnie Birch**. It has been a while and we are delighted that Bonnie is able to play for us this month. She has a very active performance schedule as well as organizing festivals and is President of the Northwest Accordion Society.

Bonnie began accordion lessons at the age of 7. Her primary teacher up to the age of 19 was Thorild Swanson from Stancatto School of Accordion and Bonnie was a consistent winner at the Washington Accordion Teachers'

competitions culminating in a trip to New York for an International competition and a performance in Carnegie Hall.

Bonnie retired from the computer field and is now a full-time musician. This includes performing in diverse situations and with many other skilled musicians. Bonnie is concentrating on jazz studies and has studied with highly reputable artists such as Marc Seales, Doug Miller, Randy Halberstadt, Fred Hoadley, and Marc Fendell, and with respected accordionists Ken Olendorf and Gary Dahl. Bonnie has a strong desire to see the accordion take its deserved position of respect amongst other well-established instruments. If you are in the Seattle area, check out where Bonnie might be playing at: www.bonniebirch.com.



Bonnie Birch

Night Time Live Special Event
Art Van Damme's 90th Birthday Bash
April 9, 2010
7:30 pm show

Kirst Hall
Hutchins Street Square
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 Lodi, CA

Tickets \$30 through February 28
\$45 starting March 1
 (plus \$3.00 service fee)
 209.333.5550
www.loditickets.com

6:30 pm doors open

Travis Catering Buffet
Extra Charge

Lodi Arts Foundation
 Lodi Arts Commission

The Technique Corner

Avoiding the Accordion Hiccups

After hearing many professionals and students changing air direction indiscriminately and incorrectly for many years, I felt it was time for a pedagogical discussion on this topic. By indiscriminately, I mean changing air directions whenever it is convenient for the player, rather than according to what is correct musically. I hate to burst some bubbles out there, but I'd estimate that at least half of the players are using the bellows incorrectly and engaging in "cutting air."

First of all, let's remember that the accordion is a wind instrument. Although most of us play the piano accordion, the mechanics of producing sound on the accordion have no relationship to how you produce sound on the piano. The accordion is just as much a wind instrument as any instrument from the reed or brass family, or even the human voice, for that matter.

The basic problem I've observed is that accordionists often change bellows direction regardless of the note value they happen to be playing at the time. As a simple illustration, suppose you're a singer who's now currently singing a word that has a whole-note value in 4/4 time. Would you think of taking a breath in the middle of the note? Not likely, because you would know that doing so would abruptly terminate the note and add another that the composer did not originally intend. That is, you would now be singing two half notes instead of one whole note.

Despite the implausibility of such a scenario for a singer, accordionists do this frequently, and not just once or twice, but continually throughout songs. Suppose you're holding a note on the pull direction and you've decided to now push. If you're still holding down a treble or bass note when you change pull to push, you've cut off the air supply to the original note value and have divided it with another note following the first of a different value. For instance, if you're holding a whole note on the pull and change to a push on the fourth beat, you have now played a dotted-half note followed by a quarter-note instead of a whole

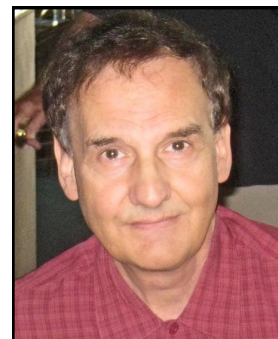
note as it was originally written. Besides changing the original note value in this manner, you've also produced a hiccup by this sudden reversal of motion, which can never sound as smooth as not doing this in the first place. This process of abrupt note termination and re-sumption cuts the air supply, and is often just called "cutting air."

So how do you avoid the accordion hiccups? The first thing to do is not change direction while you're holding a note, and waiting to change after you've completed the full value of the note. To master directional air changes, the trick is to coordinate three things simultaneously: change to the next treble and bass notes, and change air direction at precisely the same time. The change to a new note or notes and the change of air direction must be instantaneous. If you change direction even a split second before you move to the next note(s), it will sound like a hiccup, and you've engaged in "cutting air."

This trait has undoubtedly existed since people began playing accordions. Often, teachers haven't instilled this important principle to their students, and when some of these students become teachers, this trait is further perpetuated. Once you've been playing in this fashion for many years, it's very difficult, though not impossible, to correct. I've coached an older adult student who exhibited this trait when we first worked together. He had played this way for over 50 years, but after he became cognizant of this and learned the proper technique, he's now nearly "hiccup-free."

If you have any questions or comments on this issue, you can contact me at eclectica@comcast.net.

Mike Zampiceni
B.A. and M.A. in music, San
Jose State University



News and Announcements

Our Sincere Thanks!

To those who generously donate to the Club.

With each new membership year we start a new cumulative list of donors. If you have donated and your name doesn't show up in this column, please contact Val at (510) 531-4836 or vtkacc@ifn.net and let her know. We greatly appreciate your support and we want to be sure you are recognized. We gratefully acknowledge donations from: Ross and Laureen Bausone, Xavier de la Prade, Lynn Ewing, Lou Fabbri, Johan and Marja Gullmes, Ron Harris, Randall Hicks, Val Kieser, Bruce Kirschner, Herb Meier, Frank Montoro, Sundi O'Mara, Larry and Paula Re, Alex Roitman, Maryanne Romanowski (with a matching employer grant), Paul Thiel, Scott Williamson, Barbara Winter, Lore Warren, Richard Yaus & Mark Zhagel.

Mark your Calendars

Art Van Damme's Birthday Bash April 9 Lodi, CA
For Tickets: Phone (209) 333-5550 or visit
www.loditickets.com \$30 through 2/28—\$45 after.

Accordion Cruise Festival April 17—24, 2010. San Francisco Accordion Club members are invited to receive a € 25 per person discount on 1 or 2 bed bookings in a double cabin. For more details visit the English language section of
www.fisarmonicheincrociera.com.

Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration June 17-22 Leavenworth, WA. For more information visit:
www.nwasnews.com/liac.html

2010 American Accordionists' Association Competition and Festival July 14-18, Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel, Harrisburg, PA. For more information visit:
www.ameraccord.com

2010 Accordionists and Teachers Guild Competition and Festival July 21-25, 2010. It is never too soon to mark your calendars for this event being held in our own back yard (San Jose). More details will follow

Please keep in your thoughts . . .

members Aldo Argenti, Roger Cromwell and Dennis Stoscher as they are presently going through some rough times. We extend our support and wish them the very best.

Newsletter goes Online

January, 2010 marks the first month our monthly newsletter will be available to members who have elected to access the newsletter online, instead of receiving a copy via "snail mail." Among several benefits, they will get to see the pictures and graphics in color, and I can tell you there are some beautiful photos of members dressed in Christmas red! We hope that more people will consider choosing this option, which has the potential to offer the club considerable savings. If you would like to enroll or have any questions, please email me (Randy Hicks) at: hickr01@sprintmail.com.

San Francisco Accordion Band News

After a short, but sweet break, the band will resume the regular rehearsal schedule (the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month) in January. The band would like to sincerely thank Val Kieser and acknowledge all the hard work she puts in to make the SF Accordion Band a fun group to perform in—from arranging music, to leading the rehearsals, to even providing refreshments AND the space in which we rehearse. A simple Thank You hardly seems enough, but we offer it from the bottom of our hearts. **THANK YOU** Val!

SFAC Scholarship Program

Scholarships are awarded each April and October. The Scholarship requirements have been distributed to area teachers and are available upon request. Application forms are available at the monthly meetings or from any board member and must be returned to Frank Montoro, 1448 Tarrytown St., San Mateo, CA 94402 by the end of either March or September to be considered for award the following month.

News and Announcements (continued)

Who is performing around the Bay?

Steve Balich, North Bay (707) 874-3494

Ron Borelli, Peninsula (650) 574-5707
rborelli@aol.com

Renée de la Prade, Culann's Hounds, San Francisco *www.sfhounds.com*

Richard Denier, Carmel *rdenier@sbcglobal.net*

Peter Di Bono, San Francisco
peterdsf@gmail.com

Reno Di Bono, South Bay
ourhike@aol.com

William De Michelis, South Bay
wdd777@comcast.net

Bruce Kirschner and The Klezmakers,
kirschner@aol.com
www.klezmakers.com

Joe Domitrowich, South Bay
www.capricious-accordion.com or
www.alpinersusa.com

Don Nurisso, *nurisso@mindspring.com*

Mike Zampiceni, South Bay *electricguy@comcast.net*

Due Zighi Baci, (Sheri Mignano) San Francisco *www.zighibaci.com* or
zighi@sonic.net



Please Remember!

To leave our meeting hall at the beautiful Oyster Point Yacht Club clean! Please clean up any food or drink spills and toss out paper plates, napkins, cups, etc. before leaving. **Thank you!**

SF Accordion Band Practice

Wednesdays, January 13 and 27, 7:00 p.m. at Val Kieser's home in Oakland. Please **CALL AHEAD** in case there is a change. Everyone is welcome to join. For more information, contact Val (510) 531-4836 or *vtkacc@ifn.net*

Our Neighboring Bay Area Accordion Clubs

Accordion Club of the Redwoods (ACR) meets monthly on the third Monday, 7:30 p.m. at Hermann & Sons Hall, 860 Western Avenue, Petaluma. Contact: Kris Nelson *krisnelson@aol.com* or (707) 795-4860

Silicon Valley Accordion Society (SVAS) meets monthly on the first Sunday, 1:30 at Harry's Hofbrau, 390 Saratoga Avenue between Keily Blvd and Stevens Creek Blvd, San Jose. Contact: Bill Toponga (408) 984-5290

Golden State Accordion Club (GSAC). The **Vacaville Chapter** meets monthly on the second Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. at Creekside Bar & Grill, 555 Main Street, Vacaville. The **Humboldt Chapter** meets monthly on the third Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. at Humboldt Swiss Club, 5403 Tompkins Hill Road, Loleta. The **Sacramento Chapter** meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. at the Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd, Sacramento. Contact for all three Chapters: Carole Enneking (707) 864-2359

Good Time Accordion Club (GTAC) meets monthly on the second Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. at Escalon Community Center, 1055 Escalon Ave, Escalon. Contact: (209) 545-3603

Northern California Accordion Society (NCAS) meets monthly on the first Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. at Lutheran Church Hall, 6365 Douglas, Blvd, off Hwy 80, Granite Bay, CA. Contact: Vince Cukar (916) 791-3041

Your Club Wants YOU!!

Don't panic— we want you to play for our musical meetings! If you think you aren't ready for the "big time" (stage) just yet, please consider playing a piece or two before the meeting and/or during intermission! Don't be shy—we are a very forgiving, appreciative and supportive audience! Just contact any of our friendly board members listed on the front of the newsletter.

SFAC Membership

\$30.00 per year for individual or family membership. Meeting admission is \$5.00 for members and \$7.00 for guests. For membership renewal, please send a check to: S.F.A.C., c/o Valerie Kieser, 3437 Crane Way, Oakland, CA 94602. For new members, please include your name and address along with your check, as well as a phone number and email address, if available.

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Accordion Instruction

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Irving Cardoza (408) 264-9755
David Chelini (916) 428-8764
Peter Di Bono (415) 753-1502
Lynn Ewing (650) 365-1700
Skyler Fell (415) 596-5952
Lou Jacklich (510) 317-9510
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SFAC Newsletter Ad Policy

Members may place one small ad for one month free of charge in a given year; after that the charge is \$6.00 per issue. A business-card-size ad costs \$6 per issue or \$60 per year for members; a quarter-page ad costs \$15.00 for members; a half-page ad costs \$25 for members. A full-page ad costs \$50.00 for members. Discount available for ongoing ads. Ads placed by non-members will cost twice the above-quoted prices. A flyer advertising an event may be included in one issue for \$30 for members, \$60 for non-members.

NEXT MEETING:



**Sunday, January 17, 2010
2:00 p.m. Oyster Point Yacht Club**



Entertainment:

**Tangonero with Alex Roitman
Mike Zampiceni
Bonnie Birch**

Directions to Oyster Point Yacht Club, 911 Marina Blvd, South San Francisco:

From 101 traveling either North or South, take the Oyster Point exit. Turn right onto Marina Blvd. (be careful not to turn right onto Gull Drive, just before Marina Blvd.). Continue past the gate house to the sign "Oyster Point Yacht Club." There is plenty of parking and ramp access.

And come visit us online at our regularly updated website: www.sfaccordionclub.com

***Newsletter of the
San Francisco Accordion Club***

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