

# The Applewood Quarterly

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You have received the third issue of *The Applewood Quarterly*, Applewood School's newspaper. Inside you will find articles on subjects being covered and the "goings on" at Applewood School. Applewood School consists of one student, Natalie McDonald, one-part time student, Jiji (the cat), and two teachers, Pamela Beere Briggs (also Principal) and William McDonald (also Keeper of Records). We all hope you enjoy this newspaper and that you will eagerly await the next one, which will be published in mid December. If you wish to call *The Applewood Quarterly* something that isn't as much of a mouthful, you are welcome to call it "The 99," its official nickname, as both "applewood" and "quarterly" have nine letters. Have fun reading!  
*(Please see a letter from the editor on the back page.)*

## The Month-Long Field Trip

by Natalie McDonald

When the sun rose on the morning of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010, we were in our cozy beds at home in Los Angeles. When the sun set about fourteen hours later, we were settling into the stone cottage, the oldest and smallest house on Plymouth Street, and our Cambrian home for one month. We have been visiting Cambria for years, and it has become one of our favorite places. A small, coastal town 40 miles north of San Luis Obispo, Cambria is a wonderful mix of village life and nature. My mommy and I spent our month focusing on "Nature Studies" and local history, taking advantage of the ocean a block away from the stone cottage, and the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, where we walked every morning.

Fiscalini Ranch lies in the space between the residential Cambria neighborhoods of Park Hill to the north and Lodge Hill to the south, Highway 1 and the Pacific Ocean. The open ranchland, bluffs, and forests span 358 trailed acres.

*(continued on page 3)*

*Charles Dickens*  
 by Natalie McDonald

While I was rehearsing for "Nicholas Nickleby," I was not the only one in our house absorbed in the world of Dickens. My daddy was busy reading *Drood*, a novel by Dan Simmons about the life of Charles Dickens.

Charles Dickens was a very well known author in Victorian England, and is one of few authors whose work is still popularly known more than one hundred years after it was published. Dickens' works include titles such as *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, and *A Christmas Carol*, to name only a few. Many of Dickens' novels dealt with money and the vast inequality between the wealthy and poor in Victorian England. For ideas, Dickens – with a police escort – would roam East London, not a place one would generally choose to visit back then.

Dickens performed fully staged readings of his works, complete with lighting effects and characterization, to large audiences – six to seven hundred people, his friends included.

*(continued on page 8)*

## COCONUT BLISS

BY NATALIE MCDONALD

If you have ever taken it upon yourself to walk down the ice cream aisle of Whole Foods, you may have noticed a shelf of colorful ice cream cartons proclaiming “Luna and Larry’s Organic Coconut Bliss.” When I first noticed these, I was rather confused, for the entire selection of different colored cartons said “Coconut Bliss.” Surely you can’t have *eleven* different versions of coconut ice cream? If I had looked more closely, I would have noticed that each carton *did* have a different flavor... then why did they all say “Coconut Bliss” on them? Well, because all of the flavors are made with coconut milk!

When Luna and Larry met, they discovered that they shared a passion for delicious and natural foods, one of their favorites being ice cream. They did not, however, like how they felt after eating it. One day, they came across a hand-cranked ice cream maker being sold for \$1.50, and bought it. When they began making their first batch of ice cream, Luna suggested that they use coconut milk and agave syrup, instead of cow’s milk and sugar. They did, and when they tried their first bite, they knew they had discovered something. Soon they were hosting weekly tasting parties of new flavors at their house in Eugene, Oregon. Two of Luna and Larry’s friends who owned grocery stores in Eugene, asked if they could sell “Coconut Bliss” in their shops. Now, “Luna and Larry’s Coconut Bliss” is sold nationwide!

Coconut oil is a saturated fat; however, it is a medium chain fatty acid, which our bodies can easily

break down and store as energy, whereas the unhealthy saturated fats are long chain fatty acids, which our bodies store as fat. Doctors believe that coconut oil is actually the healthiest oil for consumption. Agave syrup\*, is a low glycemic sweetener, unlike refined sugars. Sugars work very much the same way that saturated fats do; low glycemic sweeteners are easier for our bodies to process, and will be stored and used efficiently.

Of course, we had to try “Coconut Bliss,” and it is quite delicious! So far our favorite flavor is Pineapple Coconut. Yum! For more information, visit: [www.coconutbliss.com](http://www.coconutbliss.com)

\*We have our own delicious use for Agave; see recipe on page 8.

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## WILD GINGER

BY NATALIE MCDONALD

On Cambria’s Main Street is a small, eye-catching storefront with lights strung from the roof and a potted lemon tree next to the front door. Behind this door, magic is taking place.

Inside, Deb Mok – the owner – goes from table to table visiting with people as they eat and exclaim how delicious everything is. This is Wild Ginger.

“It’s a learning experience,” Ms. Mok says, speaking of having owned the restaurant for eight years. “I learn something new every day.”

Ms. Mok grew up in Singapore, one of the food capitals of the world. She used to visit the markets there and watch food being prepared at the stands.

*(continued on page 7)*

## The Month-Long Field Trip

*(continued from page 1)*

First inhabited by Chumash and Salinan Indians, multiple archeological sights are located on the Ranch. One day, we participated in a guided walk on the Fiscalini Preserve led by a local archeologist, who stopped us at what appeared to be an ordinary hill, but what we were soon informed was a *midden*, or “refusal heap.” Tribe after tribe lived in that exact spot year after year for thousands of years. As there weren’t garbage dumps in those days, they threw anything they didn’t want or need – fish bones, broken tools – into their front yard, so to speak. This happened for so long, that soon the mound of dirt and artifacts grew into a hill. The dirt here is darker, as it is made up mostly of decayed matter that changed the soil’s pH. However, objects made of stone, such as tools, still lay buried in the midden. Being an archeological sight does not keep animals from burrowing in the earth; when they do, the critters kick up dirt and artifacts. We were invited to walk across the midden, looking for these artifacts that were disposed of thousands of years ago. I found two stone pieces, which turned out to be fragments of tools, due to the sharp edge that can only be made by contact between two rocks, that is, human activity.

In 1810, the land became part of a Spanish land grant, and was named Rancho Santa Rosa. The Fiscalinis then owned the land for almost 100 years before selling it in 1979. It was then that various attempts were made to turn the land into a housing development. Worried about the future of the ranch, Cambrians organized fund-raisers, accepted donations and grants, and in 2000, were able to buy and save



*A view from Fiscalini Ranch.*

Fiscalini Ranch from further danger of development. Now, Fiscalini Ranch Preserve is a peaceful and beautiful place to walk.

Part of experiencing Cambria is visiting the East and West Villages. East Village is older and more historical, West Village newer and slightly more touristy. Every day we had “town time,” about an hour in town to duck into shops and explore. Everybody in the shops is exceedingly friendly. We have favorite shops on both sides, including Potter Books, Wildwood, Home Arts, Paws on Main, The Ball and Skein, and Heart’s Ease.

Potter Books is one of two bookshops in town, and has a good selection of both new and used books. It also happens to be where I discovered the wonderful world of Harry Potter two-and-a-half years ago. Quite the coincidence, isn’t it? We always like to visit Wildwood as they have the most extensive selection of the greatest hats; all three of us have found our favorite hats there. Home Arts is one of my mommy’s top favorite shops, as it is full of unique home decorative items. Paws on Main is a recent discovery of ours. A fun rubber stamp shop with paw prints stamped onto the doormat, it is worth a visit.

We discovered The Ball and Skein, a yarn shop, on this trip, and

*(continued on next page)*

visited it multiple times. The owners, Chris and Oz, moved to Cambria from Boston last summer, after having fallen in love with the area while on vacation. Oz flew out to buy a house Chris had seen only on the Internet, and out of interest, asked the realtor about the yarn shop, only to be told that it had gone on the market the day before. By the end of the day, Chris and Oz had a new house and shop. The yarn is displayed on rope ladders hung from the ceiling, and makes the space feel almost like a neat yarn fort. Whether you are an experienced knitter or crotcheter, or want to learn, The Ball and Skein is definitely worth a visit. But you must remember the strictly enforced rule: touch everything! I did, and look how much it inspired me!



*Natalie's sweater-in-the-making.*

The moment you walk into Heart's Ease, your nose will most likely sing, "Hallelujah!" A garden shop with a charming garden to walk through in the back, it also has jars full of dried flowers and spices to make your own sachets, many different soaps, and other little trinkets. Sharon Lovejoy, the original owner of Heart's Ease, is the author of *Sunflower Houses*, the book that inspired me to grow my own garden.

Across the street from Heart's Ease is The Cambria Historical Museum, a nineteenth century house with

a wraparound veranda. For over 30 years, all of Cambria sadly watched as the house slowly fell into major disrepair – the roof sank almost to the ground; it was a sorry sight. Plans were made to knock the house down and put a parking lot in its place, which was as dismaying as the neglected house. But the Cambria Historical Society ultimately saved the Bianchini-Guthrey House, restored it into a state very similar to that it was in the 1800's – even replicating the wallpaper – and turned it into the historical museum. If you are interested in Cambria's history, make sure to stop by the museum, and do take notice of the 1866 square grand piano in the drawing room. I was invited to perform on this piano, and visited the museum every day it was open to practice for my performance of Beethoven's "Für Elise." We have become active in the museum's life, helping to plant snapdragons and violas in the back garden for the May Day festival, and doing volunteer work each time we visit Cambria. History comes alive here.



*The Cambria Historical Museum.*

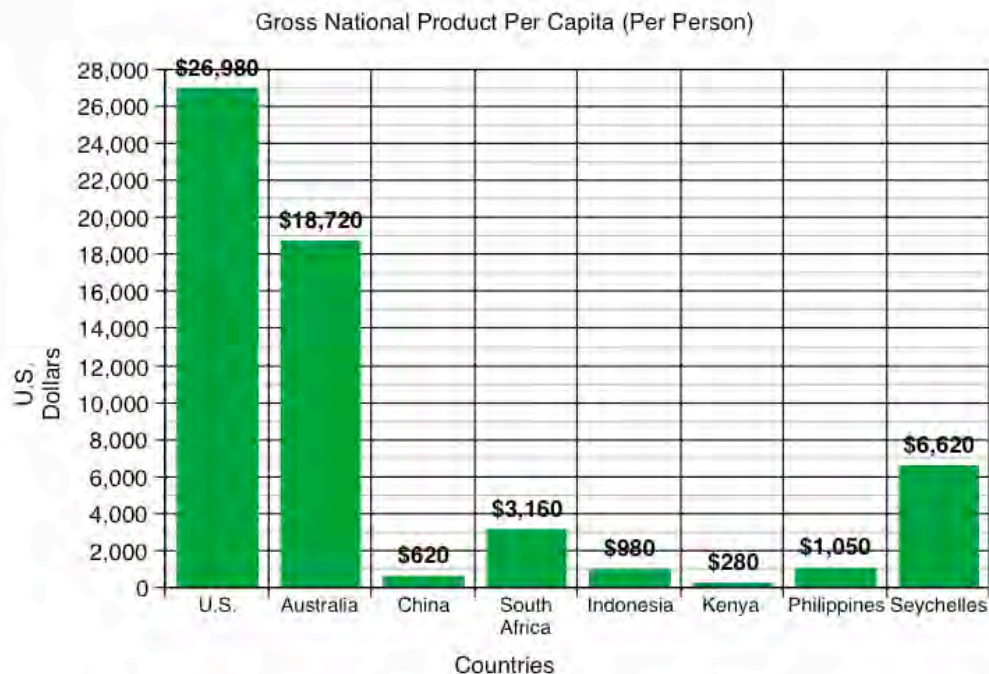
We always make sure to visit Hearst Castle, a ten-minute drive north to the visitors center in San Simeon where you catch a bus that takes you up to the castle itself, which sits impressively on top of a hill. The tour

*(continued on page 10)*

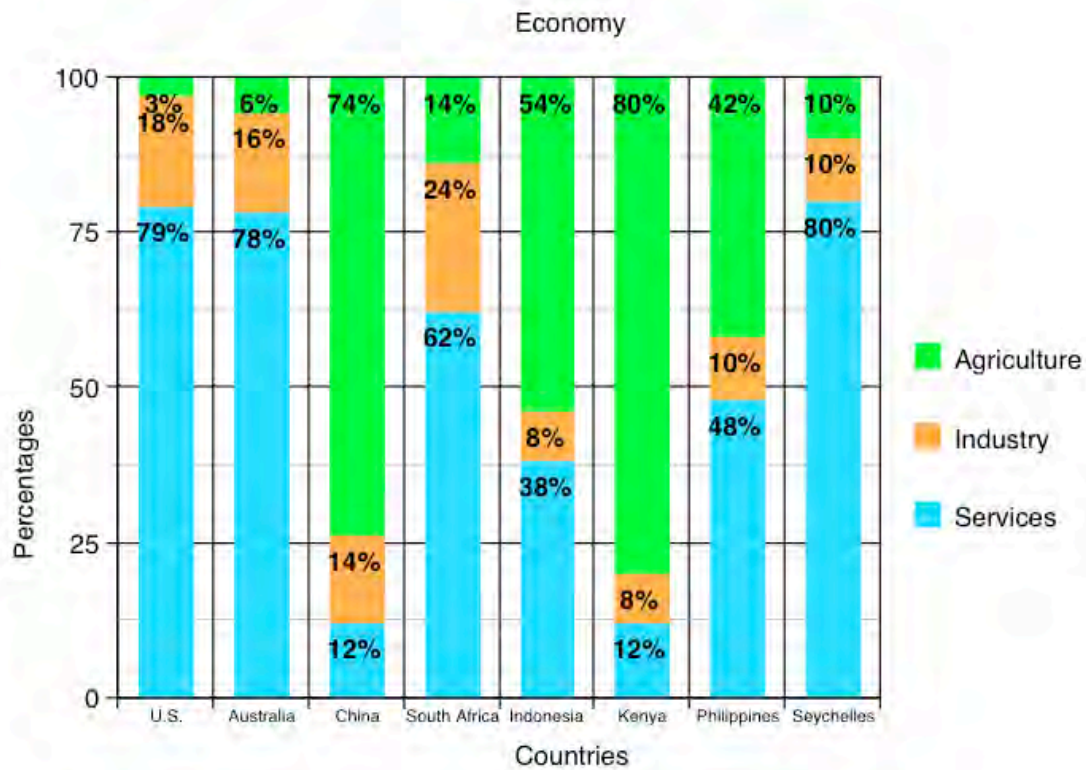
## What I Learned Sailing Around the World

by Natalie McDonald

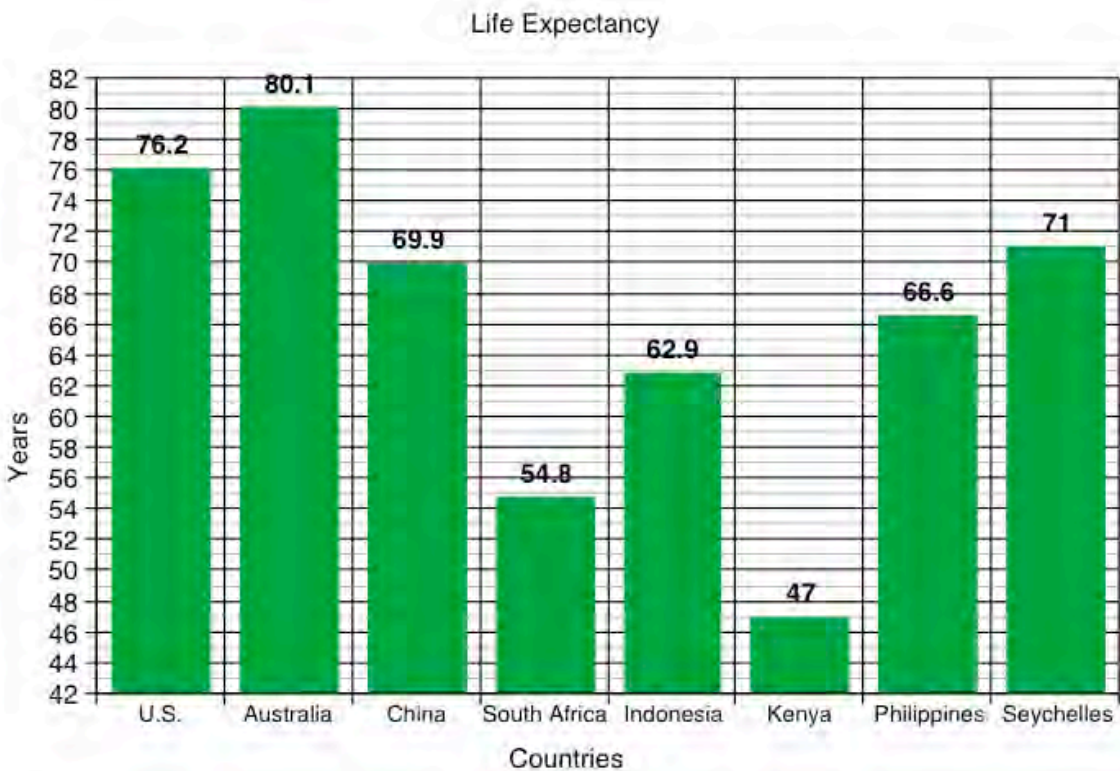
Well, I'm back! Yes, after 119 days sailing around the world, I am back! All right... just kidding. I've been at home in Los Angeles (and Cambria) all this time, but I have been *learning* all about the 30 countries the real world cruise visited. One of my favorite ways of doing so was reading the atlas. Our atlas is an enormous book called *Geographica* that weighs 7 ½ lbs (I weighed it). *Geographica* is also terribly interesting, full of maps and entries about every single country in the world. No wonder it's so heavy. Nearly every day I would read aloud an entry to my mommy on one of the countries the ship was visiting, a routine which we named "Atlas." Each "episode" of "Atlas" started like so: "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to another episode of your favorite show... "Atlas!"(followed by some made-up-on-the-spot music). There is a whole wealth of information inside the pages of the atlas, including details about weather, geography, economy, agriculture, politics, religion, culture, and history, just to skim the surface. I have constructed three graphs, the first comparing the gross national product (GNP) per capita – the average income per person – in each of eight countries. The second compares the economy of each country, and what percentage of the entire country's GNP each sector makes up. The third compares each country's life expectancy.



Geographica: The Complete Illustrated Atlas of the World  
Copyright 1999 by Mynah



Geographica: The Complete Illustrated Atlas of the World  
Copyright 1999 by Mynah



Geographica: The Complete Illustrated Atlas of the World  
Copyright 1999 by Mynah

## Wild Ginger

*(continued from page 2)*

"My sisters would call me and ask, 'How do you cook this?'" As for being a professional cook, "That," Ms. Mok says, "was an accident."

After getting her degree in chemical engineering from Iowa State University, Ms. Mok returned to Singapore, then lived in San Francisco before moving to Cambria, where she worked in another restaurant. Wild Ginger opened on July 9, 2002. The restaurant is a cozy space with six tables and brightly colored Chinese paper umbrellas hanging from the ceiling. Batik tablecloths cover the tables, and Ms. Mok's stepfather's detailed pen-and-ink drawings hang on the walls, along with a huge antique map of Singapore.

Wild Ginger serves Vietnamese, Singaporean, and Korean dishes. When your plate first lands in front of you, you spend at least half-a-minute marveling over all of the different colors and nibbles on the plate. There are always a few slices of fruit, two slices of cucumber, a bite-sized portion of shredded daikon, and a delicious jicama and carrot salad. The plate itself is nothing to dismiss either. You may end up with a boat shaped bowl, or a colorful rectangular plate, most likely purchased on one of Ms. Mok's excursions to San Francisco's Chinatown.

Then there are the desserts. These delightful homemade delicacies are displayed in a case at the back of the restaurant. It always takes a while to decide on what dessert to try in a restaurant, but it takes extra time at Wild Ginger; they all look so tempting! There is the lemon pudding

cake, the chocolate hazelnut bread pudding, creme brule, the list of sorbets to consider.... Oh, yum!

The one day Wild Ginger is closed is Thursday, when Ms. Mok is off at the Morro Bay Farmers Market buying fresh ingredients for another week of cooking. What looks good at the farmers market plays a very important role in what the week's specials will be. To create a recipe, Ms. Mok "works around" what they have at the farmers market.

We visit Wild Ginger at least three times whenever we visit Cambria. I can't resist ordering my favorite dish, Korean BBQ Pork, at least twice, and I have been known to ask while in Los Angeles if we can drive up to Wild Ginger for dinner. "If we leave now, we could get there by 8:00!" and so on and so forth. To give you an idea of how much my parents like Wild Ginger, that idea has not been dismissed as hands down silly.

Ms. Mok enjoys cooking everything, though she does have some favorite recipes and finds it fun to cook dishes different from what is served at the restaurant. On a Thursday night, we were invited to have dinner with Deb, who served us a feast of bruschetta, crab legs, coq au vin, potatoes Anna, summer squash with blossoms, and finally homemade vanilla bean ice-cream with fresh blueberries and strawberries. Both the coq au vin and potatoes Anna recipes come from "The Theory and Practice of Good Cooking," by James Beard, the cookbook Ms. Mok would choose to have if she could have only one cookbook. "If you know the technique and theory," Ms. Mok says, "you can cook anything."

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## *Charles Dickens*

(continued from page 1)

These performances inspired some controversy; Dickens' performance of Nancy's murder (in *Oliver*) was so vivid, women would scream, and sometimes faint. The performances took so much effort, that later in his life, when his heart rate was constantly 124 beats per second, Dickens would pass out at intermission. He was then taken to his dressing room where he was revived, given a fresh red geranium – his favorite flower – for his buttonhole, and then prepared to perform the second act.

Queen Victoria requested an appointment with Dickens, who despite his swollen leg and arm, had to stand through the entire meeting, as he was in the presence of the queen, who gave him a copy of her own book. Queen Victoria, having heard of Dickens' theatrical readings, requested a private performance, which Dickens respectfully declined. The queen also requested a complete collection of his work, which Dickens also refused, explaining that there was not a collection good enough for the queen. A few days later, Queen Victoria received a complete set of Dickens' works, bound in Moroccan leather and gold.

Dickens died of a stroke at age 58. *The Times of London*, which was very mocking of Dickens' work while he was alive, insisted that he be buried in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey, after the Dickens family was informed that there was no room left for the author. One did not ignore *The Times of London*; however, and in the end, Dickens was buried there.

Dickens' books are still widely read, and many of his novels have been adapted into plays, musicals, and movies. Dickens' stories greatly

changed Victorian England, and still change people's lives today.

I will always credit Charles Dickens (and Lea Floden, director of Los Angeles Youth Theater) for opening my eyes to the wonders of theater.

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## Organic or Not?

by Natalie McDonald

"Should I buy things organic or not?" The question is asked quite often. Many people buy organic fruits and vegetables, that is produce grown without the use of pesticides. Other people don't consider this a high priority. You can buy conventional produce (non-organic); however, depending on what it is, it could be harmful to your health in the long run, depending on the pesticides used. Not all conventional produce is risky, and it's nice to know the conventional fruits and vegetables that are safe to buy, as sometimes it can be harder to find organic produce.

The Environmental Working Group publishes the "Shopper's Guide to Pesticides" once a year. It is a very handy list to carry while shopping. I have included the 2010 list on page 11, but make sure to get the new list next year, as things can change. For the full list, visit [www.foodnews.org](http://www.foodnews.org).

(list on page 11)

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## *Super-Duper Easy Agave\* Lemonade Recipe*

Stir  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup light agave nectar (found at Whole Foods), 1 quart sparkling water, and the juice of 4 meyer lemons together in a quart sized pitcher. Serve chilled as a refreshing summer drink!

\*For information on Agave Syrup, see article "Coconut Bliss" on page 2.





**Fruit bats** have very good senses of sight and hearing. Bats' wings are actually their very long webbed fingers, which serve as wings. Fruit bats are very good at flying, but to stop, they sometimes have to crash land into bushes, where another colony (group) of bats may be living, causing fights to ensue. Thanks to fruit bats, we are able to eat many fruits we otherwise wouldn't be able to. The following fruits thrive partly due to fruit bats' pollination:

- Bananas
- Peaches
- Dates
- Carob
- Avocados
- Jack fruit
- Plantains
- Mango
- Guava
- Cashews
- Figs
- Durian



**Octopus trees** are also found in the U.S, and were thought by Native Americans to be a burial tree. They would train the branches to grow horizontally so that they could place a canoe coffin in the boughs.



Having fallen off the seaside palm trees on which they grow, the **coco de mer** were first observed floating in the ocean by sailors. After having been thought to be the fruit of some deep-sea plant for many years, the coco de mer were then discovered on land, and have been considered very valuable ever since. The giant coco de mer seeds, which can weigh up to 66 lbs., have been poached and are in constant danger of being destroyed by fires. The last trees bearing coco de mer seeds are now protected by national parks, but are still endangered due to forest fires.



The **elephant apple** (which varies in size similar to that of an apple) has a hard shell that one has to crack to get to the flesh inside. The flesh can be mixed with water to make juice, frozen for ice cream, or made into jam, which tastes similar to currant jelly. If started as seedlings, elephant apple trees, which are also known as the monkey fruit, the wood-apple, and various other names, will only start producing fruit after 15 years. They are common in Ceylon, Southeast Asia, and are also found in the Seychelles. Elephant apples were known as a “poor man’s food” until they began being processed in the 1950s. Elephant apple trees thrive in a monsoon (hot, humid, and rainy) climate that also has a dry season.



Giant land tortoises first inhabited the Seychelles before the archipelago’s last immersion in the Indian Ocean. They returned after the Seychelles emerged again, and still live there today, at least 200,000 years later.

The tortoises, which can weigh up to 770 lbs., have been known to live for over 200 years. The tortoises were observed by Charles Darwin on the Galapagos Islands, where the giant tortoises are better known; however, the largest population of giant tortoises live on Aldabra, one of the Seychelles’ islands. The oldest living giant tortoise is Esmeralda, who is 171 years old. He does not live on Aldabra, but on another of the Seychelles’s islands.

### The Month-Long Fieldtrip

*(continued from page 4)*

starts on the journey up, where you are first introduced to the history of Hearst Castle and the land that surrounds it. There are five tours to choose from, our favorite being Tour Two; we have learned something new each of the six times we have taken it.

Across the highway from Hearst Castle is the San Simeon Coastal Discovery Center. From the outside it looks small and rather uninteresting, but it is packed with fascinating information, ranging from marine wild life to shipwrecks. Down the road from the Coastal Discovery Center is Sebastian’s Store, home of “the best” French dip sandwich any of us has ever eaten. Recently purchased by the Hearst family, Sebastian’s Store has been serving the San Simeon community for more than 100 years.

On a clear day at Fiscalini Ranch, one can see what appears to be a large white column sitting on a point a few miles down the coast. This is the Piedras Blancas Light Station. We had wanted to visit Piedras Blancas (“white stones” in Spanish) for years, but the restricted hours prevented us from going during our shorter visits to Cambria. The tours are constructed so that you conclude at the light station,

*(continued on next page)*

## The Month-Long Fieldtrip

*(continued from previous page)*

after having walked along the coastal bluffs, learning about the history and wildlife that surrounds Piedras Blancas from engaging docents. The light station is currently under restoration, but we were still able to walk inside and gaze up at the bright red staircase that spirals up to the very top of the building.

After a day of exploring, we would always return to the cozy stone cottage, which was built by a sea captain in the 1920's. The cottage was saved from demolition a few years ago by current owners Zee Beard and Sue Mitchell, who lovingly restored it into the cozy house it is today. The cottage was the perfect Cambria home, whether we were reading in front of the fireplace or watching the sunset from the back deck. From the front porch, we could see Point Piedras Blancas. From the back garden, we could see Hearst Castle Floating above the mist on its hill.



*The stone cottage*

At sunrise on April 12, 2010 we had been in Cambria for nearly a month. That night we pulled into our driveway in Los Angeles, just as the sun set. Our month in Cambria is one that I will never forget. Seeing two whales, four herons, multiple falcons, sea lions, deer, otters, and hearing an owl at night are certainly very different from my normal city life, and makes me appreciate the little signs of nature around our urban house more than ever.

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### “Organic or Not?” List *(Intro. on page 8)*

| <b>Dirty Dozen</b><br><i>Buy these organic</i> | <b>Clean 15</b><br><i>Safe to eat conventional</i> |
|--|--|
| 1* Celery                                      | 1* Onions  |
| 2 Peaches                                      | 2 Avocado  |
| 3 Strawberries                                 | 3 Sweet corn                                       |
| 4 Apples                                       | 4 Pineapple  |
| 5 Blueberries                                  | 5 Mangos   |
| 6 Nectarines                                   | 6 Sweet peas                                       |
| 7 Bell peppers                                 | 7 Asparagus  |
| 8 Spinach                                      | 8 Kiwi   |
| 9 Kale   | 9 Cabbage  |
| 10 Cherries                                    | 10 Eggplant  |
| 11 Potatoes                                    | 11 Cantaloupe                                      |
| 12 Grapes (imported)                           | 12 Watermelon                                      |
|  | 13 Grapefruit                                      |
|  | 14 Sweet potato                                    |
|  | 15 Honeydew melon                                  |

\* The rating “1” is worst for “Dirty Dozen” and best for “Clean 15.”



Dear Readers,

Our first year at Applewood School has come and gone, full of much learning and many adventures. We started the school year with a trip to Boston and England in September, where we hope to return soon. We spent a wonderful month in Cambria, and visited 30 different countries on a virtual world cruise (☺). I also journeyed through Victorian England in two Charles Dickens plays, "Oliver" and "Nicholas Nickleby," while discovering my love of theater.

We are looking forward to another year of exciting adventures and discoveries as I will begin 8<sup>th</sup> grade and my final year at Applewood in September. Applewood School wishes you a fun and restful summer!

Sincerely,  
Natalie



### *News:*

School finished on June 11, and we all are looking forward to two-and-a-half months of summer vacation. Summer activities include tap dancing, musical theater dancing, piano, voice, and math summer school. We will begin the 2010-2011 school year with a trip to Washington DC, Colonial Williamsburg, and Charlottesville.

### *Information:*

To request Issue 1 or 2 of *The Applewood Quarterly*, contact us and we will be happy to send you one. Issue 1 of Volume 2 is due to come out mid-December 2010.

### *Special Thanks:*

Special thanks to Deb Mok for allowing me to interview her!

### *Book and Television Shows of the Quarter:*

**Book:** Each quarter, Applewood School will be reading a selected book. This quarter we are reading "Out of Bounds" by Beverley Naidoo. "Out of Bounds" is a collection of eight short stories based in South Africa, each story in a different year.

**Fictional T.V. Show:** We are currently watching the English television show "Foyle's War." Detective Chief Superintendent Foyle is a police detective stationed in Hastings at the beginning of WWII. My favorite character is Sam(antha) Stewart, Foyle's smart and witty driver. A highly enjoyable detective series, well worth watching.

**Non-Fictional T.V. Shows:** We will be finishing "Cosmos" and watching other non-fictional series, including "Civilization," during the summer.