

---

# KEEPER'S LOG

---

## Point San Luis Lighthouse



## Welcome to the Keeper's Log!

### Bus and Hiker Tours Run Wednesdays and Saturdays

The Point San Luis Lighthouse is open for tours on Wednesdays and Saturdays. To take a shuttle bus up to the lighthouse, purchase tickets [here](#). To hike to the lighthouse, register [here](#). The hike is free; bring \$10 for the lighthouse tour.

---

### A Note from the Executive Director

Our major fundraiser for 2022 is the Summer Concert Series. See page 4 for the line-up. Please consider becoming a sponsor. Sponsorships are available at varying levels, each with its own special benefits. [Click here for more details](#). Please also consider volunteering at these events, and see the concerts for free! Volunteers are needed to help with set-up/tear down of the venue area; ticketing; food and beverage preparation/service; parking lot attending; docenting; gift shop staffing and more. Email [sanluislighthouse@gmail.com](mailto:sanluislighthouse@gmail.com) or call 805-540-5771 to sign up.

Issue 32, April 2022

### Inside This Edition

---

Letters from a Keeper's Son in Siberia. Pages 2 and 4.

Letters from a Lonely Coastie. Page 3.

Summer Concert Line-Up. Page 4.

Kent Harvey: Volunteer Spotlight. Page 5.

---

A lighthouse is and should be a common synonym for absolute reliability.

~ George R. Putnam,  
Commissioner of Lighthouses ~

[www.pointsanluislighthouse.com/donate](http://www.pointsanluislighthouse.com/donate)

Happy Spring!

*Deb Foughty*

---

---

## Letters from a Keeper's Son in Siberia - 1918

William J. Smith was Keeper at Point San Luis from 1905 until 1920, having transferred from Point Arena with his wife Nannie and their four children, Elsie, Bessie, Edna, and Ralph. Ralph, age 15 when his family arrived, attended San Luis High and then U.C. Berkeley where he received a degree in dentistry. In 1917, while practicing as a dentist in San Francisco, he enlisted in the Army and served with the Dental Corps, 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry.

During the Russian Revolution, the 31st infantry was stationed in Siberia as part of the American Expeditionary Force. Following are excerpts from letters Ralph Smith wrote to his father, first printed in the *San Luis Obispo Telegram*:

### **A Seaport in Siberia, September 10, 1918:**

Dear Dad,

We arrived here safely and so far things are pretty good. We have had two days of rain and it looks like more rain – the climate here is about the same as San Francisco this time of year. I am assigned to an infantry regiment and am on duty at their infirmary here near the city. I have been about quite a little since I arrived and some parts of the surrounding country are certainly pretty. The railroad here reminds me of the old P.C. [Pacific Coast Railway] only the gauge is much broader...

### **Vladivostok, September 18, 1918:**

I am still pegging along, pulling a tooth now and then. I believe I will take on a name more Russian than mine and call it "Pullatuski." It is getting a little colder now and I suppose we will have severe weather soon. This is quite a place and in peacetime I imagine it was a lively town.

### **Vladivostok, September 19, 1918:**

Tonight is a humdinger. It has been raining all day and tonight the wind is howling like it used to at Point Arena. We have stoves fully ten feet high in our rooms and they are lined with brick and when once heated they certainly keep a room warmed up. So I guess we won't freeze this winter. The Russians built these houses with walls three feet thick, and double windows, high ceilings, and doors which reach nearly to the ceilings. I expect to enjoy the snow; it will be quite a novelty for us Californians.

### **Vladivostok, September 24, 1918:**

I took a walk along the waterfront Sunday and saw some great sights. I stopped in at the YMCA and I want to tell you those people are on the job. It is mighty nice for a soldier to be able to go to a place like they have and enjoy a little music or play a game of billiards, checkers, chess, etc. All the allied soldiers go there and it helps our boys get acquainted with our allies. I cannot say too much in praise of the Czechs. They don't know what it means to quit. They are some fighters and it heartens them to know that we are with them; what a crime it would have been for us to have stayed out of this. Our boys are in good spirits over here and are well-liked. I would almost take an oath that nine-tenths of our army would die willingly rather than quit before this is settled.

### **Vladivostok, October 28, 1918:**

Well, Dad, I am still in the same old place. Winter has set in now by the looks of things and I'll say that it is

Bob Bruhn was stationed at Point San Luis March-November 1953. He married Lucille Frances "Frankie" Stonehouse in May 1953 while he was stationed here.

Born in 1930, Bruhn enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1951, perhaps to avoid the Korean conflict. Prior to his transfer to Point San Luis, he was on a Coast Guard boat in Louisiana. Point San Luis was his first, and only, lighthouse assignment.

Bob first met Frankie while on home leave in Nebraska in 1952. His older brother Earl was dating Frankie's friend Jackie. In early 1953, Earl and Jackie married. Bob got leave to attend the wedding, serving as Earl's best man; Frankie was maid of honor. While back home for the wedding, Bob and Frankie made plans to marry; it was a whirlwind courtship.

These are excerpts from some letters Bob wrote Frankie between March and May 1953, while he was waiting for her to join him:

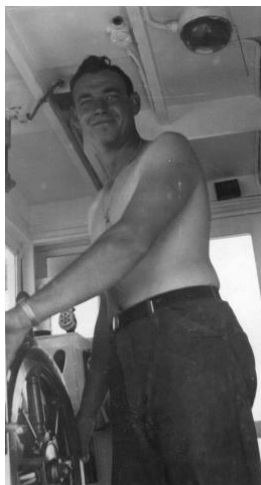
-- am now on a light station halfway between Frisco and LA, on top of a mountain. There are four married men here with their families and me. They give me extra bucks for chow so have my own cooking to do. For the last couple of days I've been on a canned diet. We've got one boat to get to shore in but you have to wait until the tide is in to use it. The only other way is to walk around the mountain or by horseback. The station did have a horse here a year ago but he got too old...

-- I'm the only engineman here and I believe that's one too many as I can't find anything to do. I've got one small boat but that doesn't run unless the tide is in and they go to town to get supplies, which is seldom, and a power plant that only runs when the electricity goes out, and that is the extent of my duties.

## EN-3 Robert D. Bruhn, a Lonely Coastie

**"When I get into town I might get a roll of film and take a few pictures of this place to give you an idea of what it's like. By the way, honey, how about a picture of you as I am really lonesome. I guess a person never realizes how much till you get 2,000 miles apart."**

**-- All my love, Bob**



Robert Bruhn: 1930-2010

-- There are four other guys stationed here but they are all married and live in separate houses so that leaves out even a game of cards or something in the evening. We've got a foghorn that keeps blowing and sounds like a sick calf. I guess it's so the ships won't pile up on this point that sticks out in the ocean. One of the guys' wife did send over a piece of pie tonight.

-- I'm lonesome here by myself. I wouldn't stay here if my hopes dwindled on you not coming out as I would prefer sea duty to this. At least you don't have to cook and they have a movie now and then. This is a good place for a married couple, though. The past week I have been working on the outboard so we can use it on the skiff when the tide is too low for the big boat. The guy in charge [John Schulz] took it out for a trial run and also to get the mail. He made it there alright but on the way back it conked out and he had to row about a mile, so I lost all the points I made.

-- I am pretty sure you will like it here as it really is beautiful around the station. There is a pretty nice beach here so you are going to have to learn to swim this summer. The water isn't too deep until you get out a ways. They have got the station all sowed with grass and lots of flowers and whatnot so it looks pretty nice.

-- Remember I was telling you last week I had the flu. It just so happened the whole station came down with it. Funny part was nobody had a cold with it and everybody's bowels were in an uproar for a couple of days. About the same day all this happened, I started the main pumps for the water to the houses and put some chlorine in the water. I didn't realize I put so much in until today when I started the same process and read the directions. I had put in about five times too much the other day. It's a wonder I didn't kill everybody. Anyway, everybody is contented to think they had the flu and I'm not going to say anything as they would probably hang me.

After they married, Bob and Frankie lived in the left side of the Victorian duplex until November 1953, when Bob was discharged and they returned to Nebraska.

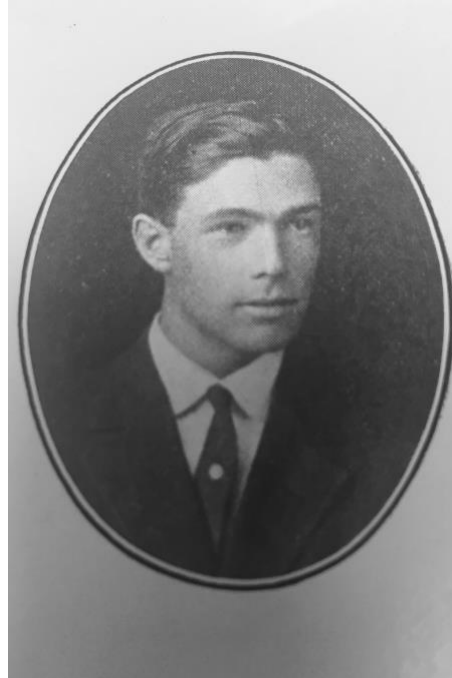
## Letters from Siberia (continued from Page 2)

some cold. I've never felt anything like it. It goes through your ordinary clothes as though you had nothing on but we have all changed into our winter togs so perhaps can stand it. The little streams around here are all frozen over and it looks like Siberia sure enough now. This is quite a country and if things ever get settled I would not mind living here. The harbor is ideal and is perfectly landlocked but of course in winter it is a job to keep it open.

I suppose I have told you what a fine people those Czecho-Slovaks are. They have surely put the fear of God into the Bolsheviks around here. They are a fine-looking lot of fellows. These fellows fought their way through Russia against fearful odds and I think they should be congratulated. I know one of their doctors and it is interesting to listen to him tell of their struggles against the Germans and Bolsheviks. My hat is off to them and I wish there were more like them. The Yanks are all in good health and all they crave is a little action but I guess our chance of seeing it is slight, for the Czechs have cleaned up pretty well.

From your son, Ralph.

(Lieut. Smith returned home in 1919 on the troopship *Logan* and was honorably discharged May 7, 1919. He practiced dentistry in San Francisco until his death in 1950.)



*Ralph Smith, son of Keeper William J. Smith, as pictured in the 1911 San Luis High yearbook. He graduated from San Luis High in 1911 and received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in May 1916 from the UC Berkeley College of Dentistry.*



*Ralph Smith in Siberia, circa 1918, where he served with the American Expeditionary Force. Courtesy of Keeper Smith's great-granddaughter, Marjorie Laws Fox.*

### 2022 Summer Concert Series At Point San Luis

Jill Knight Trio, June 26

~

Upside SKA, July 9

~

Tipsy Gypsies, July 23

~

Barflies, August 13

~

Mother Cornshuckers,  
August 27

~

Damon Castillo,  
September 10

~

Unfinished Business,  
September 24

~

The Charities, October 8

~

Tickets on sale soon at  
[My805Tix](https://www.my805tix.com)

## Kent Harvey: Volunteer Spotlight



Volunteer docent Kent Harvey was born shortly before Pearl Harbor; his first home was Balboa Island, Calif. During the war years his family moved to the Naval Ordnance Test Station, China Lake, then to the beach community of Corona Del Mar. He attended public schools and graduated from Newport Harbor High School, "The Sailors."

Kent went to Berkeley for college and came home in the summers to work as a lifeguard for the City of Newport Beach. At that time ROTC was mandatory at UC campuses for all lower division male students, and he opted for the Navy.

Kent spent several years as a deck and gunnery officer aboard the heavy cruiser USS *St. Paul* (CA-73), home ported in San Diego, where he met his future wife Kathy, then a student at San Diego State.

After Kent's Navy active duty, Kent and Kathy married and started a family. Following a year of civilian life, Kent enrolled in part-time evening law school at the University of San Diego. After graduating and passing the bar exam he worked for the San Diego County

Counsel for eight years.

Wanting some adventure, but also having a family to support, Kent left the County Counsel's office in 1978 for a job as an attorney with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, headquartered on Saipan in the Mariana Islands. The family settled into island life, and their two daughters attended local schools. "I knew I had made the right decision after two weeks when the chief judge of the local courts issued a memo requiring that henceforth all attorneys wear shoes (no more flip flops) when appearing in court."

The Trust Territory government was created after WWII pursuant to a UN Trusteeship to manage the Marshall, Caroline and Mariana Islands of Micronesia which had been liberated from Japanese control. In 1975 a plebiscite was held to determine the islands' future political status. Kent was there during the transition period through 1987 when the Trusteeship Agreement was formally terminated and the Mariana Islands became a commonwealth of the U.S. The remainder of the islands became three separate nations: The Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia. These new island nations continue to have close ties to the United States and have committed to perpetually deny military access to any other country.

Kent returned to Newport Beach in 1987 where he worked for a private consulting firm until his retirement in 2008. He and Kathy had long been attracted to the natural beauty of the Central Coast and finally moved here in 2014.

Kent volunteers at Point San Luis because of his general interest in all things maritime and his fond memories of sailing offshore at night (before GPS) and spotting a light – usually Point Loma – confirming he was at least somewhere near his destination.

---

Point San Luis Lighthouse

KEEPER'S LOG

P.O. Box 308  
Avila Beach, CA, 93424

---



As a way to honor the memory of a loved one in a very special way, Point San Luis offers dedication benches. Only a limited number are available. For information and pricing, contact [SanLuisLighthouse@gmail.com](mailto:SanLuisLighthouse@gmail.com) or call (805) 540-5771.



## Give the Gift of Membership

*If you're looking for a unique gift idea, consider giving a Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers membership as a birthday, anniversary, or holiday gift for someone special in your life.*

### Memberships Now Available Online!

Visit [pointsanluislighthouse.org](http://pointsanluislighthouse.org)

*Annual Memberships help preserve a special piece of California; each membership level comes with premiums – check them out online.*

- \_\_\_ Lighthouse Keeper - \$50
- \_\_\_ Lighthouse Mariner - \$100
- \_\_\_ Lighthouse Navigator - \$250
- \_\_\_ Light Station Inspector - \$500
- \_\_\_ Light Station Commander - \$1000

Or, send a check to PO Box 308, Avila Beach, CA 93424, payable to the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers.

Donations and memberships allow Point San Luis to stay in operation. Consider donating or becoming a member today.

Special thanks to all who support the lighthouse!

If you shop on Amazon, use [AmazonSmile](#). Choose Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers as the non-profit you're supporting. The AmazonSmile Foundation will give us 0.5% of the price of what you buy!