



## Camp - Past, Present, Future?

### Creation of the Park

**By Louise Kanter Lipsey**

*One of the founders*

To see the video interview about this, [click here](#).

My first taste of the magic of China Camp was in the late 1960s, when a Renaissance Faire was held there. Attending the Faire was enchanting, and I immediately fell in love with the beauty of China Camp. The spectacular bay vistas, oak-forested hills, meadows, beaches, extensive salt marshes, wildlife and the remnants of a historic Chinese fishing village captured my heart. Not long after that, my family and I moved to Peacock Gap. Once there, I inquired about the nearby China Camp area and began to hear rumors concerning major development plans. Finding the details proved challenging, but with the clandestine assistance of a San Rafael City Councilman I learned the truth. The councilman, who requested anonymity, showed me the major plans that the Gulf Oil Company was proposing for this last remaining wilderness area on the Bay.

### [Big Development at Peacock Gap Marin IJ 1972](#)

Gulf Oil's plans were shocking. Extensive residential areas were contemplated along with high-rise condominiums, restaurants, large numbers of stores and businesses, entertainment centers, etc. And since China Camp was then zoned industrial, there was the possibility that light industry would become a part of this proposed city of potentially more than 30,000 people. I learned that the City of San Rafael was anxious to annex the land so Gulf Oil could implement these plans. Point San Pedro Road had already been widened with this covert development in mind.



### [Agenda 1972](#)

### [Marin IJ Group To Save San Pedro Peninsula 1972](#)

Stopping a giant company like Gulf Oil seemed like an insurmountable task but I was determined to try. To begin first required a major change in the local homeowners' association. The board was then largely

compromised of developers eager for the community to endorse this enormous project. For months I went door to door trying to gather support and educating neighbors about the situation. Finally a few of us were able to successfully overturn the homeowners' association board. With the dissipation of local opposition, my next plan was to seek help from established conservation groups. All the groups offered encouragement, especially the MCL (Marin Conservation League).

[SSPP Fact Sheet](#)

[Flash](#)

[SSPP Background](#)

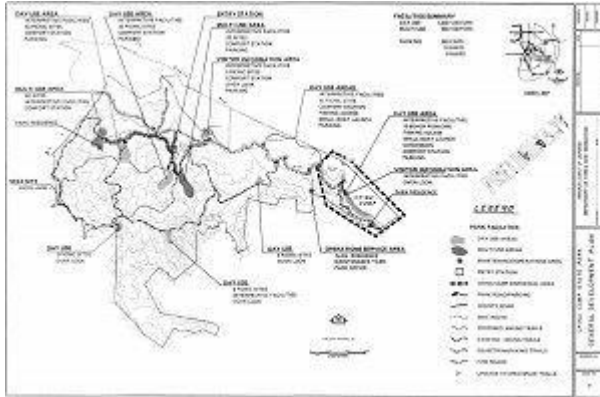
Fortuitously, the day I first visited the office of the Marin Conservation League a wonderful volunteer was at the front desk. It is my belief that this dedicated man is a major reason China Camp is here today. Bob Young immediately expressed interest in helping me, and tirelessly studied and documented every inch of the land that became China Camp State Park. He even later voluntarily wrote an extensive EIR (Environmental Impact Report).

[SR Open Space Report](#)

Soon it became apparent that broader public support was needed. Through a baby sitter, I had the good fortune to meet Elizabeth (then Tina) Ferris, a very bright, articulate, and dynamic woman. Elizabeth was an amazing ally and she, along with Sandy Koshari (then Hanson) and I (then Louise Kanter) began the group, Save the San Pedro Peninsula. It was so called, because of the San Pedro range, which we expected to become the name of the park (but we were delighted with the final name of "China Camp"). Our first of many public meetings took place in April of 1972 when we informed people about Gulf Oil's plans and encouraged involvement. Elizabeth, Sandy and I also began attending and speaking at many public meetings, and were featured a few times in the local media.



Louise Kanter (center) with City Councilman Larry Mulryan (left) at one of many Town Hall meetings



Then in 1973 the City of San Rafael created a Citizens Open Space Committee, and asked me to serve on it. Several months after I was appointed Bob Young completed his EIR and I invited him to a San Rafael Open Space meeting. His arrival created one of the most dramatic moments of the entire China Camp saga. Because Bob Young's incredible EIR was done without official permission, there was heated opposition to considering his report and one person vehemently demanded his departure from the room. A very tense moment at the meeting arose, and after pro and con

positions were presented a vote of the full committee was taken. Fortunately for China Camp, Bob's EIR was endorsed by our committee and was sent on to Robert Roumiguere, a Marin County Supervisor at the time. Roumiguere enthusiastically took up the cause and eventually Bob Young's EIR was seen by Governor Jerry Brown, who signed China Camp State Park into law.

[Open Space Ad Hoc Committee](#)  
[Peacock Gap Open Space Area](#)  
[Proposal to Establish China Camp Shoreline Park](#)  
[China Camp Development Plan](#)

Those of us who worked for years to help bring this park into fruition were thrilled. We truly believed that this beautiful jewel would be saved forever. Unfortunately, now that China Camp State Park is being threatened with closure, once again strong action on its behalf is needed.

Because China Camp State Park is so widely utilized with easy access from urban centers and with a county road going through it, realistically it cannot be safely closed. Even if it were to be officially closed, people will continue to come and hike, bike, picnic, camp, kayak, swim and fish. Not regulating large numbers of mountain bikers on the trails could result in major erosion. China Camp is the only California State Park with a historical Chinese fishing village museum, and this feature too must be protected and hopefully kept open to visitors.



We hope Governor Brown can be encouraged to save the park he originally created back in the 1970s, and that a way can be found toward financial solvency in order to keep this exquisite, popular park open permanently. Eliminating free county road parking and issuing fee passes to mountain bikers could generate considerable new income for the park.

More ideas are welcomed and people are encouraged to join the Friends of China Camp and write supportive letters. Remind our politicians that no California State Park was ever closed during the Great Depression in the 1930s, and none should be closed now. We need refuges like China Camp State Park

more than ever, both for current and future generations.



Louise Kanter Lipsey with her grandchildren, still fighting for China Camp

**Please help us save this treasure now.**

*Louise Kanter Lipsey, August 2011*

For more information on China Camp State Park go to <http://friendsofchinacamp.org/>

To become a steward of China Camp you can contact the Friends of China Camp by mail at 100 China Camp Village, San Rafael CA 94101, or go to <https://friendsofchinacamp.org/get-involved/>