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## In memory of Cedric Collett, one amazing Earth Hero

By Deirdre Finnegan | Special to the Pacifica Tribune

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The Pacifica Beach Coalition & Pedro Point Headlands honor a fallen hero because on Saturday April 27, Pacifica lost a dear friend, community member, environmentalist, firefighter, father and husband. Cedric Collett passed away while diving for abalone in Sonoma County. Cedric's death came as a shock to everyone who knew and loved him. Those who didn't know him personally have certainly been touched by him in ways they will never know. Those of us who did know him personally will forever remember the ways in which he touched their lives and our community.

As a member of the Pacifica Beach Coalition and Pedro Point Headlands, Cedric was dedicated to the preservation of our coastal habitat through his innumerable daily actions in Pacifica. Cedric was a fixture at my monthly beach cleanups at Sharp Park at 9 a.m. He came sometimes with a bag already filled from his walk from Mori Point and always with a smile on his face and a story to share about things that he found or areas for concern. Cedric was full of so many great ideas about ways in which we could help keep Pacifica beautiful. He knew everything about California and the environment and the ocean. He was such a wealth of knowledge and a friendly spirit always willing to share his wisdom with those around him.

I was also lucky enough to have a friendship with Cedric outside of the PBC. Cedric introduced me and my dad to bay swimming at the Dolphin Club in SF at the Aquatic Park. More often my dad and Cedric would swim, or hike or just have lunch. Cedric showed us the Dip Sea Trail in Marin, which was his backyard and cross country course growing up. One time he took me and my dad to hike a "Double Dip Sea" -- out and back -- it took us five hours. He showed us the secret spring and the best view to sit and eat our lunch on the hike. We were so blessed to have shared these experiences with Cedric.

Other members whose lives he's touched tell such wonderful stories about Cedric. They say that his trademark was to do the heavy lifting and tough jobs that no one else wanted to do. On the Headlands he would often go for the weeds in the thick of poison oak or the biggest ones that no one else could get. One time there was a huge tree trunk across the Arroyo trail that Cedric knew about ahead of time. While others worried it would be really hard to clear, Cedric said it was no problem to bring his chainsaw and cleared it in a matter of minutes. When not tackling a big job he was more of an observer and a thinker, not a big talker, but when he talked it was something important or insightful. He always had a smile or even an unforgettable devious smirk.

At one beach habitat restoration event Cedric showed up in work clothes, including boots that had seen better days. One of the site captains teased him about it, saying "Cedric -- it's time! Your boots have done their duty. Time for new ones!" He just smiled that sheepish smile and said, "Well, maybe one of these days. They still get the job done." That was so Cedric, he was all about the action. At last year's Coastal Clean-up in September, he showed up with a giant bag bursting with garbage, having walked along a creek bed on his way to Rockaway. He was always very pleased with his haul.

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Photo courtesy of Pacifica Beach Coalition Cedric Collett at work with the... (Contributed Photo)

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Another friend remembers the time she was walking back to a friend's house and saw Cedric pulling weeds and invasive ivy from the top of the bank/riparian area at Calera Creek. They chatted for a while, and he pointed out a screech owl that had taken up residence in a palm tree close to his home. He was so willing to share the knowledge he had she fondly recalls their conversation moving from one subject to the next effortlessly. She said that it is not often that you encounter someone as genuine and comfortable as him and felt like she knew him all her life.

After the initial shock of Cedric's passing begins to settle in, I have begun to feel comforted by memories of his hearty deep laugh, his sheepish smile, his sparkling one-of-a-kind eyes and his ever present spirit in Pacifica. Cedric made a significant mark on our Mother Earth through his dedication to our community and environment and his spirit will live on forever in Pacifica. The world lost a precious soul last week, but I am gladdened knowing that he passed doing something he loved so close to the earth and surrounded by all the beauty that he brought to us in life and in death

-- Deirdre Finnegan

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