

THE ORINDA NEWS

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December 2008

Robbery Suspect Still At Large

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

On October 22, Orinda experienced two armed robberies at local restaurants. The suspect first entered La Cocina Restaurant and then Village Pizza, both located on Orinda Way. Both establishments were closed and the employees were cleaning up. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

"I had left around 6 p.m. and the robbery took place around 10 p.m.," says new Village Pizza owner Louis Jones. "My employees were very shaken, but they handled themselves well. They gave the man approximately \$600 and called the police once he had left." At La Cocina, the robber took electronic devices (iPod and iPhone) from the employees when they could not access the safe. Jones recalls attending a

[SEE ROBBERY page 10]

High Schools Still in Financial Trouble

By CHRIS LAVIN
Assistant Editor

Just as budget officials at the Acalanes Union School District exhaled with the passage of the state budget in the fall, they drew their breath back in again with the announcement in mid-November that California will face at least a \$12 billion shortfall by February and will not be able to pay all its bills, causing Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to announce that schools would not be getting all the money promised.

"This is the highest cuts we've seen in our careers," said Superintendent Jim Negri, who oversees the four high schools in the system, including Miramonte High School. "We're back in a wait and see stage."

There is a bit of optimistic news for schools: Measure E, a \$93 million bond for upgrading and repairing facilities and to replace old technology, passed easily on November 4 with a 64 percent majority. The vote ran 33,699 to 19,002 against, and needed only 55 percent of the vote to pass. Many tax measures need two thirds. It will not change property tax bills, and will extend the current cost of \$30 per \$100,000 of a home's assessed value.

Yet the statewide budget problems are sure to continue. A principle problem for schools is that the state has fallen behind on its payments to school systems, so districts are forced to borrow money against a future payment from the state in order to make payroll and pay other bills. Because borrowing money costs money, districts are paying unnecessary interest fees on a monthly basis just to stay in the black. Teachers and some other departments

[SEE SCHOOLS page 10]

Hospice Tree of Lights a Family Tradition for Santa Claus



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Sitting on Santa's lap are Janey and Haley Chritton (now 16 and 18 respectively) with mom, Kim Chritton. Carrying on a family tradition is Todd Chritton, a second generation Santa in the Chritton family. For more information on the joint Hospice and Chamber of Commerce event, go to page 19.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
John Chritton was the Santa for the Tree of Lights ceremony for 10 years. Upon his death, his son Todd donned the red suit.

Revenue Task Force Encourages Reallocation of Fire Funds

By PAT RUDEBUSCH
Assistant Editor

Repairing Orinda's deteriorating infrastructure is the city council's top priority. With an estimated price tag of \$120 million and a city budget that provides only a fraction of the revenue needed to fill the ever-growing potholes, city officials convened a Revenue Enhancement Task Force (RETF) last March. The charge: identify possible revenue enhancements to supplement the city's current funding.

At a Town Hall-style meeting last month, the RETF presented its recommendations, which call for a multifaceted approach to meeting the city's infrastructure needs. This approach would require cooperation and partnerships with other agencies including East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD). "It will take everyone in the community to come together to solve these issues," said RETF member Michael Hanneken.

The city's infrastructure needs fall into three categories: roads, storm drains, and fire flow (or water pipes that feed fire hydrants). Looking out over the next 12 years, it is estimated that repairing Orinda's

[SEE REVENUE page 4]

Local Workshops to Focus on Downtown Planning

The Planning Process Review Task Force recently completed a tentative plan to increase density and foot traffic in downtown Orinda through a mix of retail, residential and office uses. They are now asking for community input through a series of public workshops to be held as follows:

Residential and Process Subcommittee – December 4, 4 - 6 p.m., Wagner Ranch Elementary School Gymnasium and December 6, 9 - 11 a.m., Founders Auditorium, Orinda Community Center; Commercial Subcommittee – December 11, 7 - 9 p.m., Del Rey Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room and December 13, 9 - 11 a.m., Founders Auditorium, Orinda Community Center.

The 12-member task force has held more than 125 meetings since it was established by the city council in March of 2007. Subcommittee reports and community feedback forms are available on the city's website at www.cityoforinda.org.

– Sally Hogarty, Editor

**OA Members check
page 3 for your
December discounts!**

Remaining Moraga Way Paving in the Works

By CHRIS LAVIN
Assistant Editor

Crews completed the repaving of Moraga Way from the Orinda border to Camino Encinas last spring, but complaints about a job not being finished seem to have been heard at City Hall, where plans have been put into place to finish the repaving project through downtown Orinda and out onto the on-ramp of eastbound Highway 24.

It is a stretch fraught with potholes, cracked pavement, and a bike lane that gets compromised by cars coming into downtown Orinda, but funding for the Moraga Way repaving ran out and city officials had their hands tied. Now Mayor Victoria Smith has successfully wrangled regional transportation money from the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) to complete the project.

"Years ago, there were plans to expand the off-ramp at Highway 24 coming eastbound," Smith said. Because those plans were not implemented, the city asked for and was granted permission to use the money set aside for that expansion for the repaving project.

The CCTA utilizes money from Measure C, a county-wide measure passed in 1988, and Measure J, a half-cent sales tax passed in 2004 by county voters for major projects, mostly on highways, but money can be utilized for city and county transit

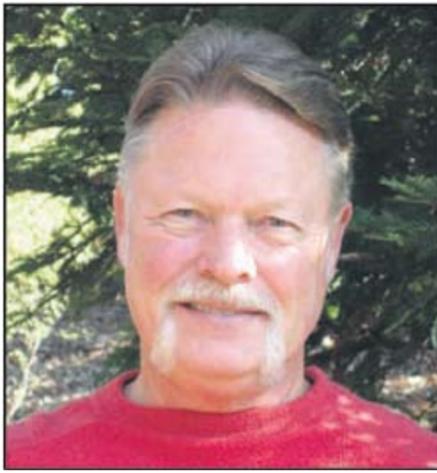
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Arts Council Presents Camera Club



WAYNE MILLER

Photographer Wayne Miller's "Cadacolor" will be displayed at the Orinda Library Gallery during December.

By **BOBBIE DODSON**
Staff Writer

Photography has entered the digital age in a big way. Lamorindans may enjoy some of the best images shot in our area by visiting the Orinda Library in December, where more than 50 pictures from the Contra Costa Camera Club will be on display.

A plethora of information will be available about the photographs during library hours, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Sunday hours are 1 to 5 p.m.

Sponsored by the Orinda Arts Council, members Maggie Boscoe and Myra Witt have charge of the display. "We're delighted to present the work of the camera club again," Boscoe says. "Their varied works are top quality." According to club president, Wayne Miller, "The public can expect to see shots in black and white and color, a mixture of landscapes and portraits, and some creative stuff like a few journalism-

type pictures, which means something newsworthy or of human interest."

Long-time camera club member, Joan Field, adds, "I think the public can learn about the latest types of prints that can be made from viewing the show. Many of our members rival professionals, producing outstanding work, but they would rather just have a good time doing the things they like to do. It's work when you're doing projects for other people."

"Our club has grown from 50 to 81 members since the first of the year," Miller says. Open to all different levels, it's a good place to meet like-minded people and to advance your photographic skills. Meetings take place the first and third Thursday of each month from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at 320 Civic Drive in the Pleasant Hill Park and Recreation Department. Competitions are held at each meeting in categories of pictorial, nature, travel, journalism and creative. Beginners, especially, learn a lot from comments made about their entries. Probably 95 to 98 percent of the work is digital, both prints and projected images.

"We also have guest speakers and field trips," Field said. "Winning images from our nightly competition go on to the Northern California Council of Camera Clubs of which we are a member." Anyone interested in learning more about the group, or in joining, call 925-330-8737 or email wayne@wmpphotos.com."



DONITA HOHENSTEIN

Hohenstein's creative photograph of an ordinary sidewalk.

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ORINDA ASSOCIATION

Seniors Around Town Driver Honored

Rosalie Heim, a driver for Seniors Around Town for two and one-half years, was honored at a recent awards ceremony for her outstanding contributions. Heim has made 168 trips taking Orinda seniors to a variety of appointments. Other Orinda drivers honored include Willard Harlow, Carol Alvord and Peggy Fuerst. All received commendations from Senator Torlakson and Assemblyman Mark DeSaulnier.

Sponsored by the Orinda Association, the Seniors Around Town program matches seniors in Orinda with volunteer drivers. The service is free and drivers go through a background check to ensure that they have a safe driving record and car insurance. Seniors registered with the program call at least 48 hours prior to an appointment and a driver is assigned. For more information on becoming a driver or registering as a rider, call the Orinda Association at 254-0800.



Rosalie Heim

MAI SUN LEE

A Message From the OA –
Change Can Be a Good Thing

Kate Wiley and Jim Luini



Regardless of who you voted for, we are all looking forward to change. Change is uncomfortable for most, exciting for some, and disappointing for others. But change brings new perspective, new energy, and ideas. I won't pontificate about domestic and world changes in our future, but I do want to introduce several new changes the Orinda Association (OA) is announcing that make your membership support easier and more valuable.

In January, the OA board of directors will have a new president and a few new board members. Our new board will bring more energy and new ideas to enhance current programs and will look to the future for more ways to serve our community. For the past 62 years, the OA has been informing and representing Orindans in addition to encouraging and promoting volunteerism. With budget cuts across the board, volunteerism will become even more important to our community, helping to maintain the high quality of life we have in Orinda.

In November, we introduced online credit card payment for OA membership. This month, we have expanded that service to include online credit card payment for our advertisers, members wishing to pay for special events, such as the upcoming

annual Volunteer of the Year and Mott Environmental Awards dinner, and the ability to order Red Cross Disaster kits and more online.

In the months to come, we will be announcing a new program for the OA which will service every household in Orinda, plus new ideas and events are already formulating related to July 4th and increasing your membership value. See, change is a good thing!

Have a safe, happy and healthy holiday.

Next OA Meeting
December 8, 7:30 p.m.
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Lamorinda CERT Disaster Exercise



SALLY HOGARTY
Volunteers take part in a disaster exercise at the Moraga Commons Park.

An 8.1 earthquake struck the Bay Area resulting in downed telephone lines, no electricity, and blocked roads. That was the scenario that local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) had at a late October simulation. Teams from Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette joined together at Moraga Commons Park to test their skills. For the first time, animal pet care was also included. For more information, go to www.lamorindacert.org.

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EDITORIAL

Editor's Note

Shop Orinda this holiday season. Merchants on both sides of the freeway offer a wide variety of interesting gift ideas. And, for something truly unique, try Virunga Artisans. The nonprofit company has gorgeous baskets, carvings, dolls, and even Christmas ornaments all made by artists in Rwanda and Uganda (see story on page 14). The Friends of the Orinda Library Bookshop is another great way to stretch your dollar. The bookshop is located on the upper level of the Orinda Library.

Letters to the Editor

Stop Yellow Posters

Now that the election is over and all the campaigning has mercifully ended, can someone please tell me what the heck is with all those big yellow posters stating, "STOP! Illegal Mailbox Advertising!?" You can't help but notice them, there must be 30 or more on Moraga Way, they run all along Glorietta and near the school, and they pepper light poles all over my neighborhood and others nearby. I first noticed them two years ago, but a new wave has landed. Besides the fact they are ugly and unsightly, give no information about what to do about illegal mailbox advertising, and are themselves illegally posted on light poles, it irks me that someone's pet peeve is so indiscriminately forced on me to have to pay attention to it. If campaigning against nuisances in such a manner becomes acceptable, then I think my first one will be "STOP! All Illegal Signs About Illegal Mailbox Advertising!".

Thank you.

— David Kirk

Correction on Measure E Story

In her excellent story ("Acalanes School District Parcel Tax on November Ballot," front page, *Orinda News*, November 2008), Chris Lavin wrote about my objections to Measure E. This measure, if passed, will allow the issuing of \$93 million in bonds for the Acalanes Union High School District.

Ms. Lavin is correct in writing that I object to Measure E because there is no property tax exemption for senior citizens.

However, Ms. Lavin said that I "would like to see promises from the district of higher student grades and higher property tax values." I do not want to see "higher property tax values." I want to see higher property values. There is a big difference between higher property values and higher property taxes.

— Richard S. Colman

Disagree with Colombu

I read Mr. Colombu's "Balanced Living" column. This column seems to assume that we human beings are helpless and are happier accepting change because it is inevitable. This is wrong. Those of us who are reasonably intelligent are capable of analyzing possible future changes, deciding if those changes will serve or not serve our self interest, accepting those changes, or rejecting those changes, making different changes or acting to keep things the same.

The philosophy of the U.S. is all about the primacy of the individual and the family. We affirm that we wish to be responsible for our own destinies and maintain the power to accept or fight changes with respect to our understandings of our own



self interest. I believe we should be loyal to that which works, reject that which does not work, and always be open to innovation, which might improve the state-of-the-art.

Only peasants and serfs accept change for changes sake.

— Henry Pinney

Thank You for Your Support

I would like to thank the voters of Orinda for their support of my re-election to the Orinda City Council. There are many residents who worked on my behalf, and I

am grateful to them as well for their confidence in me.

The election results are a strong affirmation of the path that the city council is now on to promote open and inclusive city government, prioritizing infrastructure improvements and public safety, while keeping a tight stewardship over our city budget.

It is humbling to serve in this capacity. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve our wonderful Orinda community.

— Steve Glazer

◆ **REVENUE** from page 1

roads – which have been rated as the worst in the Bay Area – would cost \$80 million. Improving the city's inadequate storm drains, which are a major cause of road deterioration, could cost \$12 million. Replacing inadequate water pipes to current fire flow standards carries a \$28 million price tag. Two previous bond measure attempts to fund these projects failed to achieve the two-thirds supermajority required for passage.

The RETF investigated 40 potential revenue sources; of those, nine were identified as viable solutions. First, the city's current pavement management and storm drain management programs together will provide \$17 million over the next 12 years. County, state and federal matching funds could generate \$2 million, and EBMUD could contribute \$4 million for water pipe replacement (assuming the same financing model put into place after the Oakland Hills fire). Other considerations for revenue include \$2 million from the city's reserves and securitizing the gas tax, which could bring in \$5 million up-front.

The most significant, and perhaps most controversial, revenue enhancements could come from reallocating Orinda's property tax dollars. Currently, 7.4 percent of each property tax dollar, or \$3.4 million, comes back to city coffers and 22.6 percent, or \$11.3 million, is allocated to the fire district. The RETF estimates that, if the city and fire district capped spending of the growth of property tax dollars at 4.5 percent, and designated any amount above that to infrastructure needs, the two agencies could generate an additional \$66 million over the next 12 years for roads, drains and pipes.

On average, Orinda homes have appreciated 6.9 percent a year over the past 10 years. And, when homes do sell, their new appraised values often are significantly higher than previously, thus improving the city's tax base. Roughly one-quarter of the homes in Orinda have an assessed value under \$200,000; yet home sales average over \$1 million.

The RETF suggest that the strength of Orinda's real estate market, which has grown at approximately 1 percent a year more than Moraga's, has created an imbal-

ance in Orinda's share of MOFD tax dollars. When Orinda joined with Moraga in 1997 to create the MOFD, Orinda's share of the newly formed fire district's budget was 62 percent; today, Orinda tax dollars provide 65 percent of MOFD's revenue. The task force calls for realigning and reallocating some of those tax dollars.

The RETF proposes that adjusting Orinda's share of the MOFD allocation to 60 percent could result in a recouping of \$4.5 million per year – or \$55 million over the next 12 years – that could be earmarked for infrastructure repairs. Orinda's proposed 60 percent share of the fire district's budget reflects the fact that three of the district's five firehouses are in Orinda. "We need to find a better way to spend our tax dollars efficiently," said RETF member Art Haigh. "No matter how you measure it, we're paying more [to MOFD] each year, and this inequality will be growing every year. It's a fairness issue."

Haigh believes the reallocation is possible and said that the RETF was ready to work with the fire district to make it happen. "This is not an attack on the fire district. They're a first-class organization

that does a lot of good for the community," Haigh added.

For its part, MOFD is not eager to reallocate the tax dollars it receives. In a prepared statement read on behalf of Fire Chief Pete Nowicki, Battalion Chief Ed Borden said that the fire district has met with the RETF committee and that they "agree with neither the assumptions nor conclusions of the Task Force."

Finally, the Task Force recommends a tax revenue package to generate the balance of funds needed. "We don't see a way to fix the infrastructure problem without new taxes," Hanneken said. "But, we could bring down the dollar amount of any tax measure by partnering with other agencies."

The RETF was co-chaired by Orinda City Councilmember Sue Severson and Allan Resnick; other members are Neal Brown, Art Haigh, Michael Hanneken, Tom Ohlson, Martin Resch, Bill Schmicker, along with City Manager Janet Keeter and Administrative and Finance Director Beverli Marshall. Severson noted that the task force has presented one proposal and that the city council has made no decisions on this proposal.

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Editor..... Sally Hogarty
 Assistant EditorsChris Lavin, Pat Rudebusch
 Advertising Representatives.....Jill Gelster, Candy Kattenberg
 Editorial Committee..... Sally Hogarty, Chris Lavin, Jim Luini, Cindy Powell, Pat Rudebusch, Kate Wiley
 Staff Writers.....Dorothy Bowen, Bobbie Dodson, Janice Gatlin, Valerie Hotz, Steve and Cathy Lambert, Jim Luini, Marian Nielsen, Ksenija Soster Olmer, Elana O'Loskey, Moya Stone, Kate Wiley
 Contributing Writers . Jean Gannett, Chuck McCoy, Anne Smith
 GraphicsAspen Consulting: Jill Gelster & David Dierks
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Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis and should be no longer than 400 words. They must include the writer's first and last name, signature and telephone number.

Send letters to: Editor, *The Orinda News*, P.O. Box 97, Orinda, CA 94563, fax them to 254-8312, or email to news@orindaassociation.org. Letters to the Editor for the January issue are due December 5, 2008.

For display advertising rates, call Jill Gelster at 925-528-9225 or email to jill@aspenconsult.net. The deadline for the February issue is January 15, 2008.

POLICE / CITY COUNCIL / BOOK GROUP



POLICE BLOTTER

October 2008

False Residential Alarms: Officers responded to 152 false alarm calls throughout the city.

Auto Burglary (theft from a locked vehicle): 1 incident.

Petty Theft From Vehicle (theft of less than \$400 value from an unlocked vehicle): 3 incidents.

All Other Petty Thefts: 1 incident.

Grand Theft From a Building (theft of more than \$400): 1 incident.

All Other Grand Thefts: 4 incidents.

Residential Burglary: 6 incidents.

Commercial Burglary: 2 incidents.

Vandalism: 6 incidents.

Stolen Vehicle: 2 incidents.

Armed Robbery: 2 incidents.

Domestic Violence - Injury of Spouse: 1 incident.

Arrests

Warrant Arrests: 6

Drugs – Under Influence: 8

Commercial Burglary: 1

Receiving Stolen Property: 1

Drunk in Public: 3

Domestic Violence - Injury of Spouse: 1

Vehicle - Traffic Stop: 1

– Compiled by Jeanette Irving, Orinda Police Department

City Council Election No Small Potatoes

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

On November 4, the people of the United States made a historic choice and elected the first African-American as president. The contentious campaign saw record spending and innovative fundraising strategies.

While nowhere near the scope of a national election, Orinda's own contested city council race saw its share of controversy, including allegations that the two city councilmembers running for re-election, Steve Glazer and Victoria Smith, were accepting special interest money. City council hopeful Bob Larsen made the allegations in print ads and in media interviews.

Documents (Form 460) filed in early October show that Glazer's contributions were all from individuals, 99 percent of whom live in Orinda. Smith listed contributions from many Orinda residents plus Waste Management, Operating Engineers Local #3, and Teamsters Local #315, while Larsen's contributors were all individuals from the greater Bay Area as well as four from Southern California and four from out-of-state.

In late October, the candidates filed contribution forms showing that even a local city council race, where councilmembers do not receive any monetary compensation, can be a costly enterprise.

Bob Larsen, who lost the election to the

two incumbents, received a total of \$17,585 in contributions from individuals primarily outside of Orinda. He spent \$12,481 on his campaign as of October 18. He has pledged to donate any unused contributions to the City of Orinda's police dog program.

Steve Glazer's October 23 filing showed \$14,573 in contributions from primarily Orinda residents plus a \$2,000 contribution from Orinda Gateway LLC and a \$2,000 contribution from a land developer in Newport Beach. His expenditures through October 18 were \$5,750. Additional expenditures are expected to be shown in the candidates' semi-annual report due February 2, 2009.

Victoria Smith listed \$18,713 in contributions from Orinda residents, the previously named organizations, and a late \$2,000 contribution from Orinda Gateway LLC in her November 3 filing. Her form 460 lists \$11,706 in expenditures as of October 18.

While the above expenditures and fundraising may seem large for a non-paying city council position, they were down from the 2004 election in which Glazer raised over \$27,000 and spent over \$21,000.

When the dust settled on November 4, Smith had received 38.79 percent of the vote, Glazer 36.87 percent, and Larsen 23.80 percent.

With the election campaign now a memory, Smith and Glazer can turn their attention to Orinda's on-going issues – improving the roads and attracting new businesses.

World Affairs Group Brings the World Home



CHRIS LAVIN

The World Affairs Book Group meets every other month at Orinda Books.

By CHRIS LAVIN
Assistant Editor

If someone had to identify a person as a gem, it would be Daisy Daymond. It's a tired expression, to be sure, but Daymond is not tired. She wishes she could be tired. But she either cannot physically or is not willing to get tired – there are too many books to research to figure out what she needs to read next. When she is almost tired, then she listens to books on tape to keep her mind off "the trivia," as she calls it, of the ordinary and less important things in life.

She is the kind of person you want picking books for the World Affairs Book Group that meets bimonthly at Orinda Books in Village Square. Daymond started

the group in the months following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Washington, D.C., when she was trying to figure things out. "When 9/11 happened, you saw a number of books, and I really wanted to know, 'Why do they hate us?' and I couldn't help thinking, 'Let me count the ways!'" When you think about how we have undermined other governments for more than 100 years with covert operations and the CIA, to say nothing of Iraq, you start to get the picture. But at the time, you saw so many articles and letters and editorials, so much information, and I looked at all the books, and picked one."

Blowback: The Costs Consequences of American Empire, by Chalmers Johnson, became the group's first book in January [SEE BOOK GROUP page 6]



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TABOR / AUTISM WORKSHOP

Friends of Tabor Dinner Featured Russian Expert

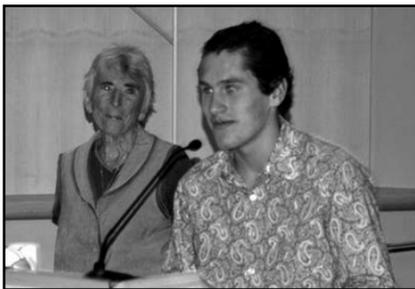
By CHUCK McCOY
Contributing Writer

The Friends of Tabor dinner at Orinda Country Club on October 21 was rated a huge success by the 80-plus attendees. The group's first formal dinner brought people of Czech ancestry from all over the Bay Area.

Dr. George Breslau, provost and vice-chancellor of UC Berkeley and an expert on Russian and Eastern Europe affairs, spoke on current affairs in Eastern Europe. Special guests included Daniel Buzu, an exchange student from Tabor attending Miramonte High School, and Richard Pivnicka, Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic, and his wife Barbara, the Honorary Consul General for Slovakia.

Tabor is a historic Czech city about an hour from Prague. Many Orindans have visited the city with quite a few residents of Tabor coming to Orinda. The Friends of Tabor strive to increase interest in and visits to Tabor. The current exchange student is the seventh Tabor teenager to live with an Orinda family and attend Miramonte.

The group plans to make the dinner a regular event. For more information on the Friends of Tabor, contact Bobbie Landers at 254-8260.



SALLY HOGARTY
Bobbie Landers and Czech exchange student Daniel Buzu.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Keynote speaker Dr. George Breslau (C) with Bea and Dick Heggie at the Friends of Tabor dinner.

◆ BOOK GROUP from page 5

2003. The group has been meeting bi-monthly ever since, and focuses on one particular issue of interest to the world.

"The group just keeps getting better and better," Daymond said. "It's been six years now, and we have read some truly wonderful books."

About 20 people attend the bi-monthly meeting at Orinda Books. "What I wanted was a public forum, not a privatized club," Daymond said. They meet every other month "because the books are substantial," she said. She selected *Hugo!: The Hugo Chavez Story from Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution*, by Bart Jones, for the November meeting.

Daymond, who lives in Walnut Creek, started the group at Orinda Books because of the store's unique commitment to service and quality. "I think it's the most wonder-

Workshop on Autism by Speech/Language Pathologist

Two workshops on autism spectrum disorders will take place on December 1 and 2 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Round Hill Country Club in Alamo. The workshops will be given by Congressional award-winning author and speech/language pathologist Michelle Garcia Winner. Winner specializes in the social-cognitive challenges seen in individuals who have higher functioning autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD and similar challenges. The workshops will be for both parents and professionals. Participants will learn about teaching social thinking and related skills to establish the foundation that students need to meet educational standards, such as reading comprehension, written expression, and more.

For more information, go to www.socialthinking.com.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Michelle Garcia Winner will give two workshops on autism.

ful place," Daymond said. "The staff will help you with any question." Many of the regular group are Orindans, but some loyal book group members come from Oakland, the Lamorinda area – even Pittsburg.

One of the perks about attending the book group is the ability to grab a copy of the "Master Book List, 2003-2007," which lists all the books the group has thus far read. Each year, the group votes for the best book of the year, which gives the reader who might be behind on international affairs a leg up to catch up with what is going on in the world. Examples include *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, by Chris Hedges, which was best book in 2004, and *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, by Stephen Kinzer, for 2007. Another perk is that Daymond is also an exhaustive researcher of films on various topics, and she emails

the titles of the best of them to members in the group.

Some members are interested in getting the lists posted on the Internet – as soon as they are able to figure out how to do that. Several proclaim themselves as "challenged" in all things technological.

In the meantime, the book group is relying on Daymond to vet the books they need to read. For a recent meeting on drinking water, Daymond went through more than 20 books – and just as many films – to find the best take on the subject.

"There are so many issues, so many things we need to know about," she said. "We need to inform ourselves."

To receive Daymond's emails regarding World Affairs Book Group meetings and the lists of topics and movies, email her at daisydaymond@yahoo.com.



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ORINDA MOTORS

ARCHITECTURE AWARD / INVESTMENTS

Architecture Awards to Be Announced at December 2 City Council Meeting

By CHRIS LAVIN
Assistant Editor

The second annual Orinda Mayor's Architecture Awards will be awarded in December in an ongoing effort to raise public awareness of superb work done by local homeowners and their architects to improve or modify their properties. The categories have been modified this year to "major" and "minor" projects, because some projects are new or totally rebuilt houses, while others are remodeling or outside architecture improvements.

Eight entries have been considered by Orinda planning officials, and four have been accepted for each category. The winners in each category will be announced December 2 at the regular Orinda City Council meeting.

"We are very organized this year," said Dorothy Dickson-Dodds, of the Orinda Planning Department. All entrants met qualifications and submitted their plans this fall. Steve Glazer, an Orinda City Councilmember and mayor when the awards started, said at the time that planning issues

are always a major issue between neighbors in Orinda and that the architecture awards could be an incentive for planners and homeowners to come together to create something that fit the neighborhood, the property's lot size, and environmental factors.

Major projects included those that spanned 1,500 square feet or more, and the minor category, less than that.

Following are the eight entrants, divided into two categories, and edited for space:

Major Projects:**15 Las Aromas****Major remodel****Completed August 2007****Steven Kubitschek, Architect**

The scope of this project was to take an existing home on Las Aromas and do a renovation and addition to the property. The residence started out as a Santa Barbara style home that had significant architectural integrity. It was the goal of the clients to maintain that integrity and embellish it to create a home that would meet the needs of their family.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

174 Crest View Drive - Jason Albright, Designer, Greenwood and Moore, Inc.

16 Heather Lane**Major remodel****Completed December 2006****Michael Brinkerhoff, Architect**

Nestled on a secluded 1.8 acre lot, the redevelopment of 16 Heather Lane replaced a functionally obsolete home with one of updated function and scale, tailored in old

[SEE ARCHITECTS page 10]

Investing in a Troubled Market

By JEAN GANNETT
Contributing Writer

At the time of this writing, the stock market has become extremely volatile, and the major U.S. market indexes have dropped over 40 percent from their October 2007 highs. And each day the headlines scream "Financial Crisis!"

So, what's an investor to do? If we listen to Warren Buffett, we should be aggressively buying stocks, which he feels have become exceptional values in this market weakness. His advice is to be fearful when everybody else is greedy, and to be greedy when everyone is fearful.

Without a doubt, the mood of investors has swung from greed to fear in just a few short months. But, for those of us who don't have a few billion dollars jiggling around in our back pockets, a few questions must be answered.

Is the current level of fear justified? Are we really heading into a depression and a prolonged stock market crash reminiscent of the 1930s?

If you feel comfortable with a "no" answer to those questions, then it's important to get a handle on whether the level of fear (or panic) is near a peak. Or will fear accelerate from here, resulting in significant further downside in stock price levels?

Finally, before wading into a depressed stock market, an investor must consider his own circumstances (portfolio allocation between stocks, fixed income securities, and cash equivalents, future needs for cash, risk tolerance, etc.). As far as risk tolerance is concerned, the investor must ask himself whether what will bother him the most – buying too soon and watching his new investments drop further – or waiting out the eventual market bottom and missing out on a worthwhile part of the subsequent market recovery.

As far as a replay of the 1930s is concerned, most economists and market analysts feel that is very unlikely. Governments of developed countries seem to have learned the lesson taught three-quarters of a century ago and appear to be taking effective concerted action to head off a financial meltdown and mitigate the fallout from the subprime mortgage mess.

What does appear likely is a recession that will impact corporate earnings in 2009 and perhaps well into 2010. Much, perhaps all of that bad news, is already built into the prices of most stocks. The ultimate earnings recovery does not appear to be factored into current stock prices.

That doesn't mean that stock prices have

[SEE INVEST page 16]

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BETWEEN THE LINES

Between the Lines

Every Day is Boxing Day at Local Bookstores

Marian Nielsen, Orinda Books



Celebrated the day after Christmas, Boxing Day, with its medieval origins, traditionally meant the giving of gifts to those less fortunate. One of the happy benefits of working in a bookstore is that almost every day is Boxing Day, and we are not in the least unfortunate. Each morning before noon, our beautiful and sturdy UPS driver pops in, almost like St. Nicholas, with a

hand-truck instead of a pack, overflowing with big brown boxes from publishers' warehouses.

What fun it is to open these boxes, especially at holiday time when publishers offer so many special titles — all of which have been ordered with the thought that each might strike someone's fancies as the "perfect gift."

One such box arrived from W.W. Norton last week and had a definite air of "something for everyone" to it. First out were two witty and erudite travel guides — *Ancient Athens for Five Drachmas a Day* and *Ancient Rome for Five Denarii a Day* (Thames & Hudson \$18.95 each) — that would be perfect gifts for the classicist on your list.

Next out of the box was *Art Towns California: Communities Celebrating Creativity — Festivals, Galleries, Museums, Dining, & Lodging* (Countryman \$18.95). Author John Villani takes the reader off the beaten path from the shores of Lake Tahoe to the outskirts of San Diego to visit both tiny towns and urban festivals where art and artists are valued. What a happy gift for any art lover!

A book for fans of both photography and fashion, Edward Steichen — *In High Fashion: The Conde Nast Years 1923-1937* (W.W. Norton \$75), was in the middle of the box, nestled next to Norton's *Shakespeare*, (\$75) a beautiful slip-cased version of their lauded 1997 *Shakespeare* with new essays, maps and timelines. Both these beautiful books would be much admired additions to Orinda libraries.

Further into W.W. Norton's box of treats were two intriguing paperbacks, *The Surgeons: Life and Death in a Top Heart Center* (Norton \$15.95) by Charles Morris and *What Einstein Told His Cook* (Norton \$15.95) by Robert Wolke. Both would make terrific stocking stuffers — one to shed light on the mysteries of the heart as well as the economics of cardiac surgery and the second to intrigue cooks and chemists alike.

Next up, two Civil War titles were

companionably side by side: *Our Lincoln* (\$27.95), edited by Eric Foner, gives new dimension to Lincoln's leadership as president and commander-in-chief, and *Brady's Civil War Journal — Photographing the War 1861-1865* (\$24.95) by Theodore Savas combines a knowledgeable text with Matthew Brady's incomparable photographs. History buffs will welcome these as holiday gifts.

Lives of the Great Artists by Charlie Ayres (Thames & Hudson \$19.95) with its bright red cover and cheerful lettering lit up the very bottom of this very same Norton box and extended the reach of its contents to younger readers, in this case ages 4 to 8. Lavish illustrations embellish the lives of artists from Giotto and Leonardo to Turner and Van Gogh and will capture the eyes and imaginations of youngsters and their grown-ups.

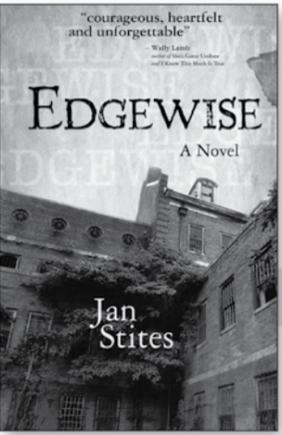
When you consider that all these books and a few more were in one packing box, you can understand why occasionally one finds Orinda Books staffers so engrossed in admiring the beautiful book jackets and handsome bindings, or even riffling through the pages of the books that they are checking in that you may have to clear your throat loudly to get their attention. We do love our work!

One of the other titles that we are excited about this holiday season (from another box altogether) is Wally Lamb's mammoth new novel *The Hour I First Believed* (Harper \$29.95). In over 700 pages, Lamb (*She's Come Undone*) writes about Columbine High School, post-traumatic stress syndrome, women's prisons, the Civil War and women's suffrage in a work of fiction that is mesmerizing and timely. And Harry Potter fans are counting the days until December 4, when J.K. Rowling's *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (Harper \$12.99) with commentary and footnotes by Professor Albus Dumbledore makes its appearance.

If the impact of global economics has not already been made perfectly clear to all readers, seriously funny writer Michael Lewis's new title, *Panic: The Story of Modern Financial Insanity* (Norton \$27.95,) brings new insights, and hind sights, to today's market upheavals.

Forget economic collapse, let's end on a tastier note—why not sample *Christmas Cookies: Bite-Sized Holiday Lessons* (HarperCollins \$12.99) by Amy Krouse Rosenthal with illustrations by Jane Dyer, a wise little book that adds dimension to Christmas traditions. Perfect for little people!

All of these books came in big brown boxes. We, at Orinda Books, had fun unpacking them and hope that you'll enjoy reading them or wrapping them up as gifts for family and friends. Happy holidays.



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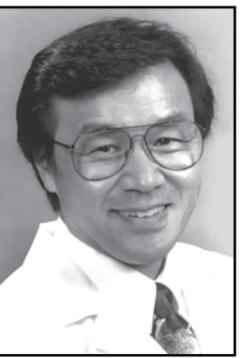
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WAGNER RANCH NATURE AREA / HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Theodore Wagner's Great Granddaughter Visits Old Homestead

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Pat Adams took a trip back in time recently when she accepted naturalist Toris Jaeger's invitation to visit the Wagner Ranch Nature Area. Adams, the great granddaughter of Theodore and Ida Wagner, had never been to the ranch. "My grandmother, Josephine, talked about the ranch and, although I was raised just over the hill in Berkeley, we never went there," recalls Adams.

Gifted to the Orinda Union School District by Theodore Wagner more than a 100 years ago, Wagner Ranch, then called Oak View Ranch, was once a 241-acre farm. Wagner, a U.S. Surveyor General, built an elegant home there in 1882, which became the center of social life in Orinda. Completely self-sustaining, the property included a carbide gas plant, winery, dairy, brick kiln, horse barn, fish pond, blacksmith shop, and the first telephone in Orinda. The original home was destroyed by fire in 1887

and rebuilt into an impressive mansion for the time. Some landscaping and foundations of the original home and work buildings can still be seen. Now, the property contains Wagner Ranch Elementary School and the Wagner Ranch Nature Area.

The nature area comprises 18 acres and gives children a hands-on environmental education. Activities from planting acorns to making adobe bricks and candle making help children understand the lives of earlier generations. A highlight of the year is the reenactment of the first Thanksgiving.

Adams and her husband and her two children had been living in Oakland when she received Jaeger's call. "The nature area is such a great idea," said Adams. "I was very impressed with how they are using our old family farm. It's like a living history." Adams brought along old photos and documents of the farm, which she has donated to the Orinda Historical Society.

"We are very grateful to Pat's great grandfather for donating this wonderful



SALLY HOGARTY
Pat Adams (R), great granddaughter of Ida and Theodore Wagner, looks over old photographs of Wagner Ranch with her husband Rich and OUSD naturalist Toris Jaeger. Pat brought several photographs and documents of her family's farm, which she has subsequently donated to the Orinda Historical Society.

site to the children," says Jaeger. "Here they can explore native plants, study the life of Native Americans, and imagine what it

was like for the early pioneers." For more information on Wagner Ranch Nature Area, go to www.orindaschools.org.

Former Owner of Black's Market Will be Guest Speaker at Historians' Holiday Dinner



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Black's Butcher Shop in Orinda circa 1948.

By DOROTHY BOWEN
Staff Writer

Longtime owner of Black's Market, Lasco Giannini, will be guest speakers at the Orinda Historical Society's (OHS) holiday dinner on Wednesday, December 3, at the Fellowship Hall of the Orinda Community Church.

Giannini now lives on his ranch in Salida, near Modesto. He bought Black's Market in 1960 from Frank Black. They were friends from their days at the Searchlight Market in San Francisco where Giannini worked after he was discharged from the service in 1945. "I didn't even know where Orinda was then," he said. "I came to see it and have been in love with it ever since." He was named Orinda Citizen of the Year in 1976, the Bicentennial Year.

The first Black's was at the Crossroads, and he opened the Village Black's in 1979 with a gala opening to benefit the Orinda Foundation. At one time, there were three Black's liquor stores, one at Rheem and another where Liquor Barn is today.

In 1979, Giannini, his late wife Alfa, and their two daughters spent 42 days in Italy where he was born in the town of Bozzano, near Lucca. When OHS president Lucy Hupp Williams and her husband visited

Bozzano at his ranch, he told her he hoped the historians would return his visit to the holiday dinner and come to a barbecue at his ranch next summer.

To meet this intriguing man, come to the OHS holiday dinner. Call 254-1353 for reservations.

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CONTINUATIONS

◆ ARCHITECTS from page 7

world architecture and materials. According to the architect, this home meets the needs of a modern family, ensconced in timeless design and site-appropriate scale.

161 Holly Lane
New home, completed May 2008
Jeff Supran, Architect

161 Holly Lane seamlessly and harmoniously blends with the Orinda landscape. The contemporary styling of the house synchronizes with the scale and characteristics of its surroundings. Architectural simplicity in the form of clean lines and building materials reinforce the sites natural elements, drawing the outdoors in and the indoors out.

51 Los Altos Road
Major renovation
Completed February 2007
Richard P. Kattenburg, Architect

This ridgeline remodel is considered a new home. Located among large houses on established lots, it disappears into the foliage while providing the owners a home that looks understated from the entry, but plays large inside. New landscaping and careful site development allow the owners to enjoy their property while offering them privacy.

Minor Projects:

25 Haciendas
Minor remodel
Completed January 2007
Patricia Motzkin, Architect

The newly remodeled residence features a copper-clad, art-glazed entry tower with a large roof overhang that provides natural shading and supports two photovoltaic arrays. The now distinguishable front façade sets the tone for a light-filled interior volume with a new sculptural stair.

38 Park Lane Drive
1300 sq foot renovation, completed
May 2008
Lara Dutto, Designer

A 1,300 square foot addition and renovation where good design has neighbors saying, "house looks beautiful...did you really add on?" The doubling in size of this family home is subtly executed with simple roof lines and low impact massing. With a distinct connection to the outdoors and the existing context, this home exemplifies a semi-rural quality and neighborhood sensibility.

45 La Campana
Kitchen & family room remodel
Completed 2006
Okois Architecure,
Susan L. Wootan, Architect

The challenge was to make the house feel open, bright and connected to nature and that any new elements should grow out of the old ones. The added kitchen and bath ceiling/roof is a smooth extension of the existing roof. The connection from interior to exterior was preserved and enhanced.

174 Crest View Drive
Pool House Addition
Completed June 2008
Jason Albright, Designer, Greenwood and Moore, Inc.

The project consisted of the construction of a new 975-square-foot split-level pool house. The pool house includes a bathroom and a wet bar area. The project included the installation of a new HVAC system, new electrical sub-panel and new landscaping. The new pool and pool deck design was by others.



16 Heather Lane - Michael Brinkerhoff, Architect



51 Los Altos Road, Richard P. Kattenburg, Architect

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

◆ ROBBERY from page 1

restaurant convention in Oakland just two weeks before the robberies. "Owners of Oakland restaurants were discussing the series of robberies in their area and told me to watch out that 'Orinda is just through the tunnel.'"

In response to the two Orinda robberies, Orinda Police Chief Bill French has added extra patrols in the business districts. Initially, a gas station robbery in Lafayette was thought to be linked to the Orinda robberies. Subsequent investigations showed that the incidents were not connected. "We currently have no leads in the Orinda robberies," says French. "If anyone has any additional information, please contact us immediately." French also reminds employees and owners to lock all doors to businesses while cleaning up after closing. "In both instances, the employees were cleaning the premises and the doors were unlocked," adds French.

The armed robberies follow a rash of home burglaries in Orinda during September and October. Orinda police, working with Lafayette and Antioch police and the Contra Costa sheriff's department, apprehended four suspects in the home burglaries. The suspected ring leader, John Charles Walters, eluded police for several weeks but was eventually killed in a high-speed police chase.

◆ PAVING from page 1

improvements, as well.

Times for public input have not been set. "We're just at the beginning stage of this," Smith said, adding that city planners have only a rough drawing of an idea of where walkways and the bike path could go. They will need to get public and engineering input before making a final decision as to how the pedestrian, biker and motor pathways will be configured in order to develop a master plan.

The CCTA is responsible for ensuring

◆ SCHOOLS from page 1

work under signed contracts, making it impossible for a school district to reduce the payroll. Supporting positions – such as administrative staff, aides for special education, janitors and groundskeepers – are the first to be cut.

"We're taking measures to stay conservative," Negri said. "But we have the same expenses as any business." With a \$50 million annual budget, he said, district officials are already expecting less revenue and are looking for ways to make it up. "We project \$2.1 million in lost revenue. It puts us into a highly vulnerable position for the coming years," he said. Vacant positions at all the high schools have been frozen and are not likely to open up any time soon, he said.

The Acalanes district serves four high schools in Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga and portions of Walnut Creek. Measure E will help fund all four, and while no difference in current property tax bills will be made, the last tax assessment included an exemption for senior citizens. That exemption was not included in this measure, so some seniors likely will see a higher line item on their property taxes in 2009. The measure is expected to provide Miramonte roughly \$12 million for upgrades, earmarked for infrastructure, repairs to hillside slides, athletic field maintenance, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning.

that Measure C and J funds are used for a variety of projects, some big and some small. Some are administered by cities, some by the county, or transit districts. Members of the CCTA develop a strategic plan for all upcoming projects, within a five- to seven-year period, every two years. The plan can be read at www.ccta.net. Notices of public meetings regarding the lanes and the resurfacing will run in *The Orinda News* and be posted on the city's website, www.cityoforinda.org.

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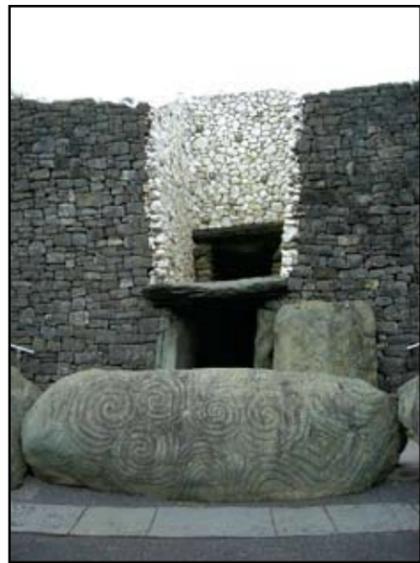
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Ksenija Soster Olmer



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MIREK OLMER

Newgrange tomb is a popular tourist stop, where a lucky 50 people are selected each year to view the winter solstice from the world's oldest solar observatory.

tombs at least as old as the Pyramids and much older than Stonehenge and you draw a blank. Too bad, because the Irish prehistoric monuments are spectacular in their own right, numerous and never mobbed by busloads of tourists. In many places, after getting lost often and profoundly, you will have an intimate experience of coming face to face with the giant dolmens, awestricken for the fact that they seem to have been dropped from the sky in the middle of the vast expanse of empty green fields.

Boyne Valley Megalithic Tombs

Anyone remotely interested in engineering will get a kick out of two neighboring prehistoric sites in the beautiful, historically rich Boyne Valley – Newgrange and Knowth. Both can be visited only on a guided tour from an interactive visit to Bruna Boinne. While you can't visit the treasure-rich Knowth tombs inside, it is a special treat to climb atop the grass-covered stone and turf mounds for a wonderful view of the valley. You can explore the passageways in the Newgrange tomb in

[SEE BACKYARD page 22]



MIREK OLMER

Impressive dolmens, a type of single-chamber megalithic tomb, can be found all over Ireland.

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The Christmas Revels Return to Medieval Europe for This Year's Celebration

By SALLY HOGARTY
 Editor

For the past two decades, the California Revels have pioneered a special musical theater perfect for the entire family. "The Revels are a wonderful experience," says 21-year Orinda resident Ben Riley. "My family and I attended the Christmas extravaganza on and off for 10 years before my daughter and I joined the fun on stage."

Ben and his daughter Jamie, now a freshman at Miramonte High School, were in the show last year, singing and playing a variety of parts. "It's an incredible experience. We met people from all over the Bay Area that have become close friends. It's very much a family affair with several generations



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA REVELS
 Geoff Hoyle in "The Danse Macabre."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA REVELS
 The chorus from Christmas Revels as courtiers.

performing together."

Riley credits his background in music and performing with helping him in his career as a business trial attorney. "I feel comfortable in front of an audience, and the skills I've learned as a performer come in handy in court," he adds.

The Christmas Revels celebrate the longest night of the year – the winter solstice – with a blend of ancient folk rituals, songs and dances from a diverse cultural arena. At this celebration of the return of the light following the darkness of winter, audience members are asked to not only hear the beautiful music but to make music of their own and even leave their seats and dance through the aisles.

This year's Revels will transport audi-
 [SEE REVELERS page 16]

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 Roger had a double knee replacement. After the surgery, he needed physical rehabilitation before returning home. We helped him regain strength and endurance. Roger is home and golfing with his friends and family.

MAGGIE
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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Local Couple Helping Gorillas and People Live in Harmony



KATIE DOYLE

These Kinigi weavers in Rwanda were the first group of artisans with whom Katie Doyle and Richard Cunningham worked.

By KSENIJA SOSTER OLMER
Staff Writer

“Encountering mountain gorillas is a life-changing experience,” says Richard Cunningham, who with his wife Katie Doyle has been traveling to Africa for nearly 30 years. “It is very different from seeing the plains animals on a safari, a much more intimate experience.” It has been a transformative experience for the Orinda couple in more than one way. In the early ‘90s, they became friends with a woman who was running the International Gorilla Conservation Program and when they retired from their careers as business executives, they decided to lend their professional skills to the newly established Business Enterprise Unit.

“One of the missions was to establish some enterprises within the communities surrounding the National parks (Virunga, Volcanoes and Mgahinga) along the bor-

der of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda’s interior,” explains Doyle. “You see, the biggest threat to the parks and the gorillas comes from the people and their encroachment. In their daily struggle to survive, they do not see the interconnectedness. The gorilla habitat is not just a source of wood for charcoal but the only watershed in the area, and if that goes, the people go, as they can’t survive without water.”

The population surrounding the parks is incredibly dense, at about 600 people per square mile. There are rich volcanic soils, but no water table, so all their needs have to be covered by rainwater which can only suffice for subsistence farming. “These remote villages are in the deepest poverty you will see in Africa,” says Cunningham. “Every day is a fight for survival; how to keep safe, how to find enough water, walking miles each day, how to find enough fuel to heat the water and cook the meager staple foods they have managed to scratch from the dirt. They grow some Irish potatoes, maize, millet and bananas. Their whole life, they might eat only eight different foods.”

“They do not know what sweets are,” says Doyle. “When we brought the women a box of See’s candy they were very suspicious to eat something so dark, and they made funny faces over the strange new taste of sugar.”

In 2006, seeing the need in the tourist market for quality products, the couple established Virunga Artisans. It was a learning process for both sides involved. Explains Cunningham, “When we first started we found only a few very low-

[SEE ARTISANS page 18]



SALLY HOGARTY

Richard Cunningham and Katie Doyle with a small sampling of the many products produced in Rwanda and Uganda. “I used to have a garage,” says Doyle. “But, now it and the house are overflowing with these beautiful items.”



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- Amy Chen

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GREEN BUSINESS / MOVE OF THE MONTH

Green Buddha, Where Gratitude Is Contagious

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

Green Buddha really began a decade ago when Jeanne Dowell of Orinda lost her Schnauzer to old age; she was grief-stricken. She responded by attending a 15 Minute Miracle workshop. The whole thing was based on gratitude. Her mind turned from grief that her dog was gone to gratitude for the 12 years they shared. Two rescue dogs immediately came into her life – Tasha and Buddy. They are her faithful companions to this day.

This turn of mind became a way of life over time. “Don’t Cry Because It’s Over; Smile Because It Happened,” from Dr. Seuss, is one of Dowell’s favorite quotes. Dowell finds inspiration everywhere: the yoga classes she teaches in the Bay Area, theologians like Paul Tillich who said, “The first duty of love is to listen,” and *Terimah kasih* which on the surface is the Indonesian way of saying thank you, but also means “we have received your love.” In her weekly yoga classes, Dowell always includes a quote as a reminder for her students to live more peacefully in their daily life – the students love it.

This penchant for collecting quotes came in handy when Dowell and her daughter Dana Dowell Windatt began developing Green Buddha, an eco-friendly line of clothing and other products, three years ago. Windatt freely admits she caught the “Attitude of Gratitude” from her mom.



(L-R) Michele Houston, Jeanne Dowell, and Dana Dowell Windatt of Green Buddha, an eco-friendly line of products.

“My mother looks fabulous – teaching yoga for 30 years really shows! How many moms do you know who keep a gratitude journal? I’m grateful for such a passionate role model.” Among Windatt’s many talents, design is foremost, although she also teaches yoga. The mother/daughter duo hired Michele Houston, their long-time friend, to serve as their eco-consultant. Houston researches every product for tough eco-friendly standards and is a fountain of knowledge in this cutting-edge industry. At Insight Resource Group in Orinda, where Michele works, projects like these are commonplace. Dowell says, “Dana and Michele

are amazing! It’s like electricity when we’re together – one of us has an idea and before you know it Dana’s got a design for it, and Michele’s doing the research. It’s a ton of fun.”

The Green Buddha clothing line is made from earth-friendly organic cotton, modal or bamboo fabrics. Their organic cotton clothing is made from rain-fed cotton grown without the use of pesticides or insecticides. Houston’s research shows that “for every yard of non-organic cotton produced, over a pound of chemicals has been sprayed on it.” Modal is derived from self-rejuvenating beech trees, with a softness surpassing mercerized cotton. This innovative fabric resists shrinking, stretching and fading while pampering the skin and the environment. Bamboo is rain-fed and naturally pest resistant. It does not retain odor and is shrink resistant; it is spun into fiber that is super soft.

Dowell loves stationery, and when one of her friend’s daughters went to Nepal and brought back beautiful note cards, she had to have them. The stationery is made

[SEE BUDDHA page 20]

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HOME SWEET HOME

◆ INVEST from page 7

a clear path upward from this point. We have no idea at what level the economy or the stock market will finally bottom out. But, it's important for investors to remember that bear markets invariably bottom out long before the economy does. When business begins to pick up, stock prices are likely to be well off their lows.

So, what's an investor to do? We'll go back to Buffet's advice, keeping in mind that he is sitting on a bottomless pile of cash. Accept his notion that prices of many stocks are extremely attractive. At the same time, we've got to treat this as a bear market until it proves otherwise, and we must manage our investments accordingly.

If you have a large portion of your investment portfolio in cash (say, 15-20 percent or more, including money funds, short CDs, etc.), it is a good time to start buying stocks. Because there's no guarantee that stocks won't get cheaper still, stage your money into the market over the next few weeks or months, with emphasis on periods when the market is weak. Keep doing this until your investment cash gets down to around 10 percent (the target percentages quoted here should be adjusted to your cash needs and risk tolerance, as described above), or until you are convinced that the major bear

market has bottomed.

On the other hand, those investors who have committed all, or nearly all of their investment cash to the market, or who have margin debit balances, should use market rallies (and there will be plenty of worthwhile rallies before the bear departs) to buy some cash by lightening up on some of the less attractive stocks in their portfolios. The cash should come in handy on subsequent market dips.

What stocks should be considered now? Stick to quality this time! Look for companies that have strong balance sheets (low debt compared to equity) and a solid history of increases in per share earnings and cash flow (you can look this data up in Value Line at local libraries). Increasing dividends and a leadership position in their industry are also important. Examples of groups to consider: consumer staples (food, beverage, etc.). Investors who follow the disciplined approach suggested above should be able to sleep well at night despite the growling bear. And one morning not too far in the future, they're likely to wake up to find that a new bull market has taken over and their portfolio values are happily heading due north.

Jean Gannett is a financial consultant with Park Place Wealth Advisors, Inc.

HOME SWEET HOME
Handling Unsatisfactory Work



Janice Gatlin

Sometimes some element of a project doesn't turn out the way you expected. If that happens, what should you do? First, before you contact your contractor, calm down and get into a "we-will-work-this-out-together" frame of mind.

Most contractors strive as hard as you do in their work, take great pride both in the work and in pleasing you. But, as in all of life, unexpected things happen. People use the phrase "it's not an exact science." Being an ex-scientist, I can tell you that even science is not exact. Remodeling comes with the added pitfall of having to work with the existing home and all its pre-existing faults.

When you do get in touch with your contractor, he will probably be surprised and disappointed that he didn't make you happy and in any problems with the work. He may be a bit gruff and embarrassed, as well. Just imagine how you feel when your boss comes to you with a problem with your own work. So start with that understanding and trust that your contractor will do everything to rectify the situation.

California Contractor's Law specifically allows for the contractor to return and do what he can to rectify any problems. If you are thinking about making a complaint or filing a lawsuit, it's to your benefit to first contact the contractor to try to work it out. Even if you're convinced that you eventually want to go the complaint/suit route, your case will be much stronger if you've already made every attempt to solve the problem.

Also realize that a complaint or suit against a contractor is much more serious

than your boss talking to you in private about work. Contractors rely on their records (which are public) to gain work. A complaint can do a great deal of damage to a contractor that may not be necessary simply to get what you want remedied. Think about it this way: Suppose every time your boss came to you about a problem with your work, he also posted his dissatisfaction (but not the fact that you remedied it) on the Internet for the whole world (including other firms you might like to work with in the future) to see.

How much time should you give? You should hear back within two business days once you've called your contractor. If you don't hear back, call several more times, leaving messages, and also write a letter. Because folks are sometimes out of town, I recommend waiting for 10 days for a response before taking any other steps, if possible. If after his visit and discussion he refuses to do anything to remedy the problem, then you may want to consider other measures.

Once you do meet with him, assuming it's not an emergency, give the contractor time to resolve the problem. He may be in the middle of a bathroom remodeling job in a house with only one bathroom and not able to leave that job until the client has a functioning bathroom.

As usual, an attitude of trust and willingness to work with someone usually works better and faster than an adversarial stance.

Janice Gatlin is a local general contractor and owner of Always the Best Home Repairs. Contact, www.ATBremodel.com.

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◆ REVELERS from page 12

ences to medieval Europe as they present a new staging of "The King and the Fool," featuring the incomparable Geoff Hoyle. Previously produced by the group in 1995, director David Parr has re-envisioned the piece with new choral music, hearty sing-a-longs, courtly dancing, and a children's chorus.

Set in an ancient castle, the tale tells of a king being entertained by his court, his troubadour, and his court jester (Hoyle). As the festivities progress and the winter solstice approaches, the spirit of darkness appears in the guise of the Black Knight, who challenges the king to combat. The action depicts the demise and eventual return

of the kind who, like winter, must die to be reborn again in the spring.

"It's an amazing undertaking," explains Riley. "So many people from many walks of life come together to make the Revels happen each year. It's quite a time commitment." Riley and Jamie are taking a break from the show this year but hope to be involved again soon. The busy Orinda family also includes wife Janet, president of the Educational Foundation of Orinda, and son Keith, a sophomore at San Francisco State University.

This year's Christmas Revels take place December 12-14 and 19-21 at the Scottish Rite Theater, 1547 Lakeside Drive, in Oakland. Tickets can be reserved by calling 510-452-8800 or online at www.calrevels.

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Steve & Cathy Lambert



Every winter, many gardeners, ourselves included, go through “withdrawals” when it becomes too cold and rainy to work outdoors. One thing that always brightens our dreary winter days is the first blooms from our Lenten and Christmas Roses. These winter-blooming perennials are both members of the helleborus family.

For many years, helleborus were considered specialty plants more suited to plant collectors than the average gardener. In recent years, however, plant breeders have worked to develop varieties that have mass-market appeal. In Orinda, one of the most challenging planting niches to fill is flowering plants that will thrive in a shady garden where deer are prevalent. The hellebores fill this niche nicely because they are considered to be mildly poisonous – just poisonous enough to keep deer away, but for those of you with children, don’t rule this plant out. It would take eating a large quantity of its tough, leathery leaves or flowers to harm a human. Another advantage of both of these winter bloomers is that they are drought tolerant and thrive even when neglected. They are, however, sensitive to too much moisture and require a spot that has proficient drainage.



STEVE LAMBERT

A good choice for winter is the silver-dollar sized Lenten Rose.

The Lenten Rose (a rose by name only, not a true rose) grows in a bushy clump averaging 2 feet wide by 15 inches tall and is covered in thick, evergreen, hand-shaped leaves. In late winter, its 12- to 18-inch tall blooming spikes emerge from the underground rhizome. As the flower spikes begin to top the leaves (which flatten out in the winter), it branches out, producing clusters of silver-dollar sized flowers. What we refer to as the “flower” on the hellebores are in fact not petals, but a modified calyx or sepals which account

for its extended blooming period of three months or longer.

The array of interesting colors of this perennial’s blooms is what captivates plant collectors. Each variety is dramatically different, with basic colors ranging from a dark blue-purple to a deep red-purple and from pure white, to chartreuse, pink and even yellow. The color patterns on the blooms add another element of fun and whimsy to this winter garden showoff. Breeders continue working to add different colored speckles both to the center and the edge of the flowers while also manipulating the blossom’s shape. Some breeders prefer the cup-shaped flowers, which can grow in either an up-facing position or a more natural downward bell form. The bell-shaped blooms allow you to appreciate the outer petal color rather than that of the inside of the flower. Still other hybrids are grown specifically for their large, flat, open blooms.

In the past few years, growers have started to name and sell hellebores based on flower color and characteristics. Because this perennial grows with a variety of colors by seed, the grower must either propagate by division from identical plants, or sort by color from a large batch of seedlings when they’ve come into flower.

Here are a few of our favorite helleborus varieties: “Blue Lady” is dark and alluring with an up-facing, cup-shaped flower that boasts smoky plum hues with bluish overtones and bright white central clusters of stamens. Lustrous and dark green, its broad evergreen leaves are divided into seven to nine segments per stem.

“White Lady Spotted” is an elegant plant that will take command of your winter garden. Warmed by a maroon center and distinctively showcased against a dark green, thick-leaved evergreen base, each beautiful, rounded white blossom appears as if sculpted from snow.

One hellebore we often use in our landscapes is “Ivory Prince.” With its dark, dusky pink buds and outward facing, ivory-petal blooms, this vigorous Lenten Rose is aptly named. Ivory Princes’ exquisite flowers have a subtle infusion of colors, ranging from soft green and antique rose on the inside to an earthy plum hue on

[SEE GROW page 20]

Montelindo Garden a Club That Grows on You



SALLY HOGARTY

Montelindo Garden Club members (L-R) Mary Lou Lucke, Judy Martine (red hat), Karoline Doberenz, Kathy Brady, Katie Creighton, Natalio Miranda and Andreas Corrales from Miranda’s Landscape maintenance, and garden club member Lee McCaffree. Not shown: Trudi Garland and Marjorie Hitzl. The club and fellow volunteers from Miranda’s Landscape planted bulbs in the mini-park by Theatre Square in November. McDonnell Nursery donated the mulch.

By ANNE SMITH
 Contributing Writer

Service to the community and providing garden inspiration for more than 130 people describes the Montelindo Garden Club in Orinda. The name Montelindo, which means beautiful mountain, is appropriate because members have been beautifying the mountains here since 1970. The club focuses on community beautification projects, provides educational garden

speakers at meetings, and small group garden-related activities and field trips.

The club has maintained the Orinda Crossroads Gardens for the past 30 years. According to Katie Creighton, an ongoing passion of the group is replacing the original plants with California native grasses and drought-tolerant plants on a harsh site. This year, they will plant 300 daffodils on that site and are helping Orinda with a planting

[SEE MONTELINDO page 20]



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CONTINUATIONS

◆ ARTISANS from page 14

quality products – carved gorilla heads made by young male carvers and standard woven baskets made by women. We had to establish basic perimeters of quality, size and pattern. It was a difficult process for us, because we had a hard time rejecting a basket from a woman who had to walk 10 miles to bring it to us and who spent 20 to 30 hours weaving it.”

While the artisans had to grasp new standards and ideas, Cunningham and Doyle had to learn about a totally different social

structure in which the local people operate. They saw how their interdependence can be a positive force, because they all depend on each other for survival. But it can also make bringing business concepts to such a society very challenging. “We came across interesting dilemmas,” says Doyle. “One of the women we met is a very good basket weaver and her baskets are of superior quality, but she would not accept more money for her products because she could not be seen as above others in the village. Because if she was perceived as such she ran the risk that others wouldn’t

be willing to come to her aid when she needed someone to tend her field when she had a sick child at home.” How to solve this dilemma? By working with the group as a whole, establishing an apprenticeship program, where a master weaver teaches the others, and is compensated for her knowledge and skill.

“Another issue is their understanding of a business relationship,” adds Cunningham. “There is very little commerce, because their lives are based on a barter economy. I have some extra potatoes; I will trade you for your bananas. Many of our women never held money in their hands before we bought their first basket from them. So it has happened that we had a large order of woven Christmas ornaments that they were bringing to the nearest town. But as they were walking along the road a car stopped and someone inside said, ‘We are driving to Kigali, and we’ll buy your ornaments from you.’ Sure, they were happy to sell them and save themselves many miles of walking.”

“Well, much has changed since then,” says Doyle with a smile. “When we first started working with the women in Uganda, they wouldn’t even look us in the eye, they just stared at their feet. They had no hope for the future. Now when we visit, they walk miles from the surrounding villages, and they bring drums and they dance and sing, they socialize among themselves and what is even more amazing is that their girls are going to school, and they are accessing the local health clinic.”

“And our carvers,” adds Cunningham, “who used to be a bunch of surly teenage boys, are now budding entrepreneurs. We came up with new product ideas for them. Instead of just carving those big gorilla heads, they are now making nut dishes and gorilla book ends. They had no idea what book ends were, as they do not have books.”

“It is true,” continues Doyle, “that school is free, but in order to go to school a child has to have a uniform and pencils and that costs money. And even if you have that but you are a girl, there is another problem that has to be overcome.” Cunningham and

Doyle found out that girls stopped going to school around age 12.

They wanted to find the answer to this enigma, and it has proven to be more basic than we could possibly imagine. At about 12, the girls get their first periods and stay home for a week each month, and, therefore, quickly fall behind until they finally can’t keep up and drop out. “We found out that girls simply do not have underwear or sanitary supplies to be able to attend school during this time in their young lives. So we had underwear made for them.”

“But this is not the end of the struggle. The quality of education is so abysmal; there are no books, no qualified teachers in those villages. Even those who somehow persevere soon realize their future is not in the village, and their only goal becomes how to get away and to town.”

So the goal they envisioned was to help the young generation see the new possibilities beyond the traditional carving and basket-weaving, such as establishing seedling nurseries, irrigation projects or cell phone rentals.

The couple says, “All the money that we make with the sales of our crafts goes back into the enterprise and community. Because we are passionate volunteers compared to NGOs (Nongovernmental organizations) that might occasionally show up in the area, we have no overhead, and we offer our villagers continuity that doesn’t depend on a renewed grant. We offer people to people, grass roots support.”

In only two years and six trips, Doyle and Cunningham accomplished a lot, but already they have bigger plans in the works. Discouraged with unresponsive NGOs that for months wouldn’t find the time to answer an email, they have decided to hire an expat British woman to be their operations manager on the ground. They are hoping that soon she will be able to mentor and train two local women, one in Rwanda and one in Uganda, to be their liaisons in respective countries.

“We are looking for those exceptional young women with some education and leadership skills to grow with our project and share with us our vision of combining conservation of the gorilla habitat with a new future for the disenfranchised women and youth. It is the art of people and gorillas living in harmony,” says Doyle.

For more information on Virunga Artisans and their beautiful products visit: www.virungaart.com. When searching for the perfect holiday gift, don’t forget local stores that carry Virunga Artisans products such as Orchard Nursery Gift Shop in Lafayette, Body Time shops in Oakland and Berkeley, East Bay Nature Center in Walnut Creek, and the Oakland Zoo.

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TREE OF LIGHTS / TOT DROP

22nd Annual Tree of Lights Ceremony Kicks Off Holiday Season

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

Santa Claus will once again ride on his big red fire truck to greet youngsters at the annual Tree of Lights ceremony sponsored by the Orinda Chamber of Commerce and Hospice of the East Bay. This year's event takes place on Saturday, December 6 at 4:30 p.m. in the Orinda Village Square parking lot (close to the Bank of America) on Orinda Way (Orinda Village exit) across from the tennis courts.

Participants will enjoy choral music sung by local elementary and junior high students before Mayor Victoria Smith turns on the 1,400 lights strung in the centuries-old double trunk oak tree – look for the wooden sign: "Hospice of the East Bay Tree of Lights." Each light represents the life of a loved one who is being honored or remembered. Hot cider, popcorn and cookies will be served while youngsters wait to discuss their holiday wishes with Santa and maybe have their picture taken on Santa's lap.

The Santas in Orinda have a rich history. John Chritton represented Santa Claus beginning in 1986. After his death, his son Todd took over the job. Todd remembers when it all started: "There was my dad dressed up as Santa in a lawn chair with some candy canes and about 30 people at the first tree lighting. Last year, there were easily 300 people. I was so proud of him. He was the real deal, over 6' tall with a huge white beard – I'm a wanna-be Santa. I had to buy a pillow for my costume!"

John and Sally Chritton, Todd's parents, became involved through their volunteer work at East Bay Hospice. Todd attended Sleepy Hollow School as a boy. His then teacher, Patti Camras, is now involved in the Tree of Lights Ceremony. When his children, Haley and Janey were young, they sang in the kid's choral group that performs at the event. Todd's eyes are sparkling as he relates the countdown: "The mayor gives her speech, the elementary and junior high kids sing their songs and the 1,400 lights go on; at this point, I'm at the fire station

– I jump on the fire truck, and we take off, lights blazing, and we arrive at the Tree of Lights – the kids are screaming – it's amazing!"

John Chritton's last year as Santa was 1998. "He had done it for over 10 years," recalls Todd. The first year I did Santa, Patti Camras was the main organizer – how cool! My dad taught me how to handle the kids – it's scary for a lot of them, they are so young. Here's my dad's secret: Make it easy for them to come to you. I sit down and open my arms. When they walk towards me, I ask them: What's your name? 'What would you like for Christmas? Were you a good girl (or boy)? Is that your brother (or sister)? Would you like a picture.'"

Diane Hill, president of Orinda Hospice remembers John, "He had a long white beard and was a wonderful Santa Claus for many years. He and his wonderful family have done a lot for Hospice over the years." Pauline Kaune, historian of East Bay Hospice says, "John's nickname was Santa even before he volunteered because of his snowy beard – he was very special, always a smile, positive and cheery. His wife, Sally, and whole family were involved. We were thrilled when his son Todd took it over."

The Tree of Lights Ceremony is East Bay Hospice's (EBH) main fundraiser of the year. The lights stay on till mid-January. "For \$20, people receive a donation package with a postcard they can send to whomever they are memorializing, or their family. Each light is a symbol – it can be for a graduation, marriage or other milestone," Kaune explains. "Every year, I buy my grandkids a light. They can't wait till we get there and then they shout, 'Grandma, where's my light?'" She recalls that people always say, "There's a light shining for me." The Tree of Lights truly reflects the community – past and present. Kaune stresses that East Bay Hospice is the only truly nonprofit hospice in the East Bay which assists anyone, regardless of financial considerations. For more information

about Hospice of the East Bay, call their main office at 925-887-5678 in Pleasant Hill or go to www.hospicecc.org.

Over time, the Orinda Rotary got involved supplying Santa with candy canes and putting up tables. The Orinda Hospice group provides hot cider and cookies. Boy Scout Troop 237 puts up a tent and keeps the crowd organized and moving. Rotary Club volunteers offer to take instant photos of kids on Santa's lap. Of course, the Orinda Chamber of Commerce also helps with volunteers and coordination while Rossmoor volunteers work the tables. This is a total community event – don't miss it.



SALLY HOGARTY
The large tree in front of the Bank of America building in Village Square becomes a Tree of Lights every holiday season.

Local Resident's Childcare Solution

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Ruth Kaiser was an Orinda mom dissatisfied with available childcare options in the early '90s. Frustrated by a lack of flexible alternatives, she began her own unique operation, Tot Drop, in 1994. Since then, Tot Drop has expanded from one facility to seven.

Unlike other preschools, Tot Drop does not require a long-term commitment. With as little as 24 hours notice, parents can reserve one to four hours for one day or more. "We are extremely flexible," says Kaiser. "When I was a stay-at-home mom, I didn't need a preschool every day. I needed an hour or a day here and there and no one offered that type of service so I started my own."

Kaiser encourages parents to bring their child for just an hour the first time so children can get used to the new setting. Parents can stay for that hour if they like so that children feel comfortable and more secure when the parents leave them for longer periods. "We like to relieve any separation anxiety a young child might have," Kaiser explains. "If they have a special toy or blanket that they want to bring with them, that's fine also." Many of Tot Drop's clients have one parent who stays at home and drops the



SALLY HOGARTY
Tot Drop Owner Ruth Kaiser with Jack Kalway and Georgia Winkles at the Lafayette Tot Drop location.

children off one day a week in order to do volunteer jobs or club activities.

Kaiser had been a kindergarten teacher before starting her family of three children, all of whom are now in college. The techniques she learned then serve her well with Tot Drop. "It's very important to me that we provide a stimulating, play-based environment," she says. "I make sure our staff constantly engages with the children and the parents. It takes a lot of energy, but it's also so much fun."

For more information on Tot Drop, go to www.totdrop.com. To make a reservation for your child (aged 1 – 5 years), call 888-TOTDROP.

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CONTINUATIONS

◆ BUDDHA from page 15

from trimmings of the Lokta bush, which grows above 6,500 feet in the Himalayan mountains – the resulting paper lasts for centuries. It is made by women and men employed in a small cottage-based industry in Nepal. The genuine Bodhi leaf on the note cards jumps out at you, a well-known symbol for enlightenment and patience. By tradition in Nepal, they would never write on the Lokta note card itself – it is considered to be part of the gift; they would write on the enclosed sheet and continue to replace it over and over again, while the card travels on. The more worn the card becomes, the more valuable it becomes, because of all of the gratitude that has been associated with it on its journey. When it is finally worn out, it is framed and hung in their home as a sign of good fortune.

Windatt says that just about every time she has a negative thought, she thinks, “I can’t go there; I represent the Buddha.” Choosing gratitude as a way of life has helped her as a parent, “My children are growing up fast, like weeds! Gratitude helps me focus on today, while we are still together as a family, for they will be grown up and gone in no time. My mom has encouraged me to surround myself with people who have good energy, so I can fly with the eagles.”

Houston tells the story of a business colleague who bought a newspaper from a crotchety old guy every morning on his

way into work. She noticed that although her colleague always treated him politely, the guy merely grunted or totally ignored him. She asked her colleague, “Why do you greet him with such good manners when he never responds in kind?” His response was, “Because I don’t want his reaction to me to change the person I am.” Houston says this made a huge impression on her, to stay centered in the positive without allowing external circumstances to pull her into the negative. “It takes practice, but it’s worth the effort,” she adds.

Both Dowell and Windatt love clothing made from bamboo because it’s the perfect material for people taking yoga classes – it naturally wicks away perspiration and feels soft and silky. Many people use technical T-shirts for sports activities, but they are sprayed with chemicals whereas bamboo fabric does a better job, sans chemicals.

Fans of Green Buddha say using eco-friendly products is like completing the circle from nature’s fields to their homes. Green Buddha offers socks, T-shirts, hoodies, baseball caps, beanies, tote bags, yoga mat bags, stationery, notepads and children’s T-shirts. They recently added stainless steel water bottles and holiday ornaments, with more products to come. A percentage of all proceeds go to S.E.E.D.S. – a grass roots relief organization benefiting Nepal’s poorest villages (www.nepalseeds.org). It’s their way of giving back in gratitude for all they have received. Their men’s and children’s line comes from EDUN, the

Bono and Ali Hewson clothing line (www.edunonline.com) which supports developing areas of the world, particularly Africa.

Celebrities like Maggie Gyllenhaal revealed in her red-carpet interview for *The Dark Knight* (aka Batman, 2008) that her gorgeous red dress was made from bamboo.

Calypso Twist, 1357 North Main in Wal-

nut Creek 925-944-4860 (calypstotwist@sbcglobal.net), carries Green Buddha stationery and other items. They are expanding venues to include selected boutiques in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles. You can reach them online at www.thegreenbuddha.net. Or, give Green Buddha a call at 925-377-5024 – but be prepared, you might “catch” some gratitude!

◆ GROW from page 17

the exterior petal. Its sturdy wine-tinted stems and deep green leather-like foliage marked by prominent light green veining and toothed margins allows the shrub to maintain a pleasing evergreen presence in your garden all year. Our favorite planting combinations with Ivory Prince is to add a foreground planting of ajuga “Catlans giant,” or black mondo grass.

Two other members of the helleborus family that deserve a spot in your garden are *H. argutifolius*, the Corsica Hellebore, and *H. foetidus*, the so-called “Stinking Hellebore.” Corsica Hellebore has big racemes of light green, cup-shaped flowers that nod well above its gray-green foliage. The sturdy, trifoliate leaves of this bushy plant have veins of ivory with small serrated edges that turn red with age. A small evergreen shrub, Corsica grows only to an average size of two feet by two feet, and is a late winter bloomer.

We’re also big fans of the *H. foetidus*, the so called “Stinking Hellebore,” because of the dark green finger-shaped leaves that adorn its 18- to 24-inch tall stems. This

helleborus makes a great background plant to hostas and ferns in your summer garden. As the perennials of summer go to sleep, the evergreen clumps of *H. foetidus* remain and become the focus of your winter garden. In early winter, its flowering stalks emerge, opening around the first of the year with foot-tall spikes of green, bell-like flowers. These flowers remain attractive until early spring.

In addition to adding some color and interest to your garden in the winter, most varieties of helleborus make a great cut flower at the time of year when your options for an indoor bouquet are limited. Most of the above perennials can be found in local garden centers year round. We recommend that you start shopping for them now, as they’re starting to bloom, so that you can choose the color, shape, and habit of flower that you prefer.

If you have any specific questions about choosing or planting helleborus, email us at office@gardenlightslandscape.com. You can also find copies of this and previous “Way to Grow in Orinda” articles on our website.

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◆ MONTELINDO from page 17

plan for the median strips near the highway. The club is in continual talks with the city to strengthen beautification.

Sandi Worthington, a past president, also explained that this year the group passed on more than \$2,700 in donated funds to the Diablo Valley College Adaptive Horticulture Program for disabled students. This money was used for garden development, signage, an entry gate and tools for the program. Besides this program, the club also donates money to Penny Pines, a national program which has already planted more than 31,000 pine trees. In addition, the club makes sure that convalescent homes and the library has flowers every month, and donates funds to other gardens, such as the Ruth Bancroft Garden and the Garden Conservancy.

Outreach for worthy causes isn't the only focus of the club. Its members may hear garden speakers at their monthly meetings, join small garden discussion groups, cooking groups, and travel on garden tours. Recent mini tours have been to Grubb Nursery in San Francisco, and future tours

are scheduled for University of California-Berkeley's Blake's Garden on the Berkeley campus and the Orchard Nursery in Lafayette. A bigger spring garden tour also is on the schedule.

Most meetings and activities are all free, except for a \$25 membership fee. “That’s really wonderful these days,” explains garden club member, Nancy Chenoweth, an original member who is still highly involved in the club and its mission. The members always welcome newcomers.

Additional activities include gourmet cooking groups at members’ houses and the annual holiday luncheon at Walnut Creek’s Heather Farms in early December. Member Marjorie Hitzl explains that people like to “dress up in their holiday best, socialize, eat and shop at the boutique put on by the members.” It seems these friendly, enthusiastic gardeners serve the East Bay and get closer to nature.

The Montelindo Garden Club, which meets on the third Friday of the month at the Orinda Community Church, is always happy to have new members. For more information about the group, go to www.montelindogarden.com.

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CALENDAR

ON THE CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 1 **Christmas Tree Lot**, 9 Altarinda Road, benefit for Education Foundation of Orinda. Hours 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday through Sunday. (925) 528-9522.
- 3 **Orinda Historical Society** Holiday Dinner, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Orinda Community Church Fellowship Hall, 10 Irwin Way. Speaker Vasco Giannini. Tickets \$38. 254-1353. For invitation visit www.orindahistory.org.
- 4 **Friends of the Orinda Library** Holiday Book Sale, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., sorting room and bookshop, Orinda Library. 254-1358.
- 6 **Orinda Books** Author Discussion, 3 p.m. Jan Stites discusses and signs her new novel, *Edgewise*. 254-7606.
Hospice and Chamber of Commerce Tree of Lights Ceremony, 4:30 p.m., Orinda Village Square parking lot by Bank of America, 254-3909.
- 7 **WomenSing** Holiday Program, 3 p.m., First Congregational Church, Berkeley, 2345 Channing Way, "O Holy Night." Repeats at 8 p.m. on December 10 at Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive. Tickets \$25, \$20 and \$18. For information visit www.womensing.org, or call 925-974-9169.
Guitars Not Guns, a holiday music performance, noon, Orinda Rotary, Orinda Community Center. Seniors from Orinda senior housing will be guests for holiday lunch. 254-2222.
Whiskers, a musical adaptation of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Various times through December 20 at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek. Call 925-943-SHOW.
- 16 **Orinda Owls**, 7 p.m., Orinda Books. Reading and discussion of *An Uncommon Reader*, by Alan Bennett. 254-7606.
Page by Page Book Group, 7 p.m., Orinda Books. Reading and discussion of *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali.
- 17 **Orinda Rotary**, Solar Energy Discussion, noon, Orinda Community Center. 254-2222.

AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified.

- 2 **Peek-a-Boo Time**, 11:30 a.m., songs, rhymes and rhythms for pre-walkers (infants to 1-year-olds) and their caregiver. Note new time! Those with older siblings are welcome to attend Toddler Lapsit. Repeats December 9 and 16.
Toddler Lapsit, 10 a.m., stories, songs and bounces for 1- to 3-year-olds and their caregivers. Repeats at 10:30. Please attend only one story time a week. Also December 3, 9, 10, 16, 17.
- 3 **Paws to Read**, 3:30 and 4:30 p.m., Have your child practice reading with a furry listener. For children in grades 1-5. Sign up at the library or call 254-2184. Sponsored by the Friends of the Orinda Library. Also December 10.
- 5 **Sleeping Beauty**, 11:30 a.m., Library Auditorium, presented by children ages 6 through 10. Admission \$10, children 10 and under \$7. Charge tickets by calling 510-531-4400.
- 6 **The Sound of Music**, 5 and 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, presented by children ages 6 to 12. Continues December 7 at 2 and 4 p.m. Admission \$10 for adults, \$7 for children 10 and under. Charge tickets by calling 510-531-4400.
Saturday Morning Live! 11 a.m. Family storytime for 3- to 5 year-olds. Meets in the Picturebook area. Also December 13 and 20.
- 9 **Library Fireside Chat** series with Actors Reading Writers performing Truman Copote's *A Christmas Memory*, 7 p.m., around fireplace in library. Stars Thomas Lynch directed by John Thomas.
- 14 **Dance-Along Nutcracker**, 4 p.m., Orinda Library Auditorium. Participants may dance on stage or in the aisle. Admission \$10.
- 16 **"Natural Solutions to Depression,"** a Fireside Chat, 7 p.m. Dr. Jay Sordean's previous presentations at the library include natural solutions to allergies and depression.
- 17 **Holi-dawgs!** 7 to 8 p.m. Read a story to a Santa Paws, a Dreidel Dog or a Kwanzaa Kanine; sing some songs and other holiday celebrations. All ages welcome. Sponsored by the Friends of the Orinda Library.

For more information on library programs, call 254-2184.

CITY/FIRE/SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

- Acalanes Union High School District**, first and third Wednesdays, district office, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette, 7:30 p.m. 925-280-3900.
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**, Orinda Library, May Room, fourth Wednesday, 8 a.m., 253-1997.
- City Council**, first and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, www.cityoforinda.org. 253-4200.
- Historic Landmarks Committee**, fourth Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m., Library Garden Room, public is welcome, for information, call 925-788-7323.
- Moraga-Orinda Fire District**, third Wednesday, 7 p.m., Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, www.mofd.org.
- Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees**, OUSD Conference Room, 8 Altarinda Road, 4 p.m., 254-4901.
- Planning Commission**, second and fourth Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, 253-4210.
- Parks and Recreation Commission** Second Wednesday, 7 p.m., Community Center, room 7, 254-2445.

CLUB MEETINGS

- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**, fourth Wednesday, 8 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library. Call 253-1997.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**, Postino's in Lafayette, 7 a.m. every Friday, 254-0440, ext.463.
- Orinda Rotary**, Community Center, every Wednesday at noon, 254-2222. No meetings December 3, 24 or 31.
- Orinda Association**, Orinda Library, May Room, second Monday, 7:30 p.m., 254-0800.
- Orinda Historical Society**, third Wednesday of the month, OHS Museum, 3 to 5 p.m., 254-1353.
- Orinda Job's Daughters**, first and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 925-283-7176.
- Orinda/Tabor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**, Fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.
- Orinda Woman's Club**, Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon; call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.

CALENDAR BY CHRIS LAVIN

Send calendar items to chrislavin@earthlink.net

Musical Version of
Velveteen Rabbit

Orinda Intermediate School student Elena Wasserman (shown on the right with Melissa Wilson) and Miramonte High School student Cecily Schmidt perform in *Whiskers* at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek December 13 - 20. Wasserman portrays Holly Hobby and Schmidt is Tina the Ballerina in this musical version of the popular children's tale. *The Orinda News'* editor, Sally Hogarty, appears as Nana, the lone human surrounded by mischievous toys. Call 925-943-SHOW for tickets.



JAY WASSERMAN

WomenSing Sets Holiday Program

Celebrating its 43rd year, Orinda's WomenSing chorus will present a holiday program, "O Holy Night," this month, the first concert in "A Celestial Season," with choral selections highlighting the chorus's hallmark programming of "the traditional and the unexpected."

Vaughan Williams' "Magnificat" will be featured, with guest artist, mezzo-soprano Jessica Deardorff. Also on the program are an eclectic mass that includes Jeffers' awe-inspiring "Sanctus," a set of bell pieces, including "Ding Dong! Merrily on High," and Lischka's "Meissner Glockenspiel," two pieces by Pablo Casals, "Nigra Sum" and "Eucaristica," Mendelssohn's "Laudate Pueri Dominum" in honor of the 200th an-

niversary of the composer's birth, and "Go Where I Send Thee!" as a rousing closer.

Led by Artistic Director Martín Benvenuto, and accompanied by Paul Caccamo, WomenSing is a 50-member auditioned chorus, based in Orinda. Performances will be at 3 p.m. Sunday, December 7, at the First Congregational Church, Berkeley, 2345 Channing Way, and at 8 p.m. December 10 at the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive.

For ticket information, visit www.womensing.org, or call 925-974-9169. Ticket prices are \$20 for general admission, \$25 for premium seating, and \$18 seniors and children.

— Chris Lavin

Library 'Fireside Chat' Series
Welcomes Actors Reading Writers

By MOYA STONE
Staff Writer

The Orinda Library will again host the popular Berkeley theater group, Actors Reading Writers (ARW), for its Fireside Chat Series this month with the group's dramatic reading of Truman Copote's *A Christmas Memory*. Written in 1966, this classic holiday tale is an autobiographical story of 7-year-old Buddy and one memorable Christmas he spent with his 60-something distant cousin.

The reading will take place at 7 p.m., December 9, around the fireplace in the Orinda Library.

Actors Reading Writers is a Berkeley-based group of actors who adapt short stories to perform at the Berkeley City Club the first Monday of every month. Founded in 2005 by local thespians Thomas Lynch and Rica Anderson, the group has performed short stories by Dorothy Parker, John Updike, Flannery O'Connor, and Anton Chekhov, to name just a few. In July, the group performed its popular version of Somerset Maugham's, *The Three*

Fat Women of Antibes for an enthusiastic Orinda Library audience.

Orinda Library Adult/Teen Services Librarian Ian Richards is pleased to be able to have ARW back. "We are thrilled that Actors Reading Writers has agreed to return following their highly successful summer performance," says Richards. "We encourage everyone to join us in getting into the holiday spirit with their reading of Truman Capote's classic Christmas tale."

A regular monthly series, Fireside Chat highlights various local people of interest from actors, to authors, to business professionals. Always held on a Tuesday, Fireside Chat attracts audiences from throughout the Lamorinda area. Recent presenters included docents from Berkeley Repertory Theater discussing upcoming shows and lawyer J. Gary Gwilliam, who spoke about his memoir and the ethics of law.

The reading is free. The Orinda Library is located at 26 Orinda Way. For more information on the program, call the library at 254-2184



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BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 24

sing praises of Jose Vega, the day manager and cook and Jason Ehrich, the evening manager, and grandson of DiSano. The Village Pizza staff will remain the same, and the only change planned is a bit of minor redecorating.

“One week I suddenly had a thought in my mind to buy a restaurant. I was just in the beginning stages of this thought when I discovered Village Pizza was for sale, and I jumped at the opportunity,” says Jones, who is committed to continuing DiSano’s legacy of community involvement by supporting local athletic programs. Jones’ ownership of Village Pizza became official in late September. “I love the small town and friendly family atmosphere that is so prevalent in Orinda,” he adds.

Like many people these days, Jones has experienced several diverse careers. His first job out of college was as an electrical designer for Kaiser Engineers, which required extensive travel and included a stint in Richland, Washington. As a result of his desire to be closer to home to see his



Louis Jones, a 22-year resident of Orinda, is the new owner of Village Pizza.

children grow up, Jones established Bright-Jones Financial Mortgage in Orinda, with an office in Oakland as well. Giving back to his community has long been a priority for Jones, who coached OYA Basketball for seven years and continues to participate in a youth mentoring program. Supporting Miramonte High School athletics and OYA sports is another way Jones continues to give back to his community.

Many Orindans enjoy Village Pizza’s great pizza with the perfect crust as well as delicious homemade soups. “One regular, Pat, comes in every Saturday and has

ordered every soup on the menu,” says Jones. The alfredo pesto combination pasta is excellent, as is the chicken with pesto pizza, not to mention the classic ribs and gourmet hamburgers.

For the best in customer service and excellent pasta dishes, you can’t do better than Village Pizza. Standing in a seemingly endless line one holiday season, I overheard a mother explain through her cell phone, “I am going to be a few more hours. The crowds are huge. Just order a pizza, 254-1200.” Bingo. Immediately a compatriot was recognized. Village Pizza delivers, too. For more information, call (you know this) 254-1200. Village Pizza is

Orinda Shell Auto Care services all makes and models of domestic, European and Japanese cars, including the new hybrid models. In fact, O’Brien attends technical school classes on a regular basis in order to keep up with the new technology of today’s cars. “Some cars have a dozen computers on board related to such features as disc-brakes, transmission and airbags. Today’s auto mechanic works with a computer instead of a wrench. The wrench is from a bygone era,” adds O’Brien, who also regularly attends special classes related to hybrid models.

A San Francisco native, O’Brien lived on the Peninsula before gravitating to



Staff at Orinda Shell Auto Care include (L-R) Brad Trumbo, Ryan Bock, Mike Riserbato, owners Joey O’Brien and Kathy Mitchell, and John Maney.

a longtime member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce.

Orinda Shell Auto Care

Also located on the north side of Highway 24 is Orinda Shell Auto Care, owned by Kathy Mitchell and Joey O’Brien, who have been providing friendly and trustworthy service to Orindans since 1999. They lease space from the Shell Oil Company, located in the Shell Station at 9 Orinda Way.

“Previously, we managed a couple of independent repair shops in Walnut Creek and that is how we met. A salesman for Napa Auto Parts came in one day and told us this business was for sale. We were excited and immediately moved on the opportunity to own and manage our own business,” says O’Brien. O’Brien and Mitchell (as well as all their techs) are Automotive Service Excellence certified, a nationwide standard.

“What are your concerns?” is how Mitchell greets every customer, and immediately she receives a description of symptoms from the car owner. “Our business thrives on word-of-mouth referrals, and it has served us incredibly well. Business continues to be very good,” explains Mitchell.

Walnut Creek, where he managed an auto repair shop. O’Brien has been diagnosing and repairing all makes and models of cars since he was 16 years old. After graduating from high school, he immediately enrolled in Auto Technical School.

Kathy Mitchell is originally from Walnut Creek, where she graduated from high school, with stints in Japan and Hong Kong along the way. Mitchell previously worked in the shipping industry for American President Lines, as a pre-school teacher, and as a workers compensation examiner. She enjoys managing the business and her partnership with O’Brien. “We are very community oriented. It has been fun over the years to sponsor such sports as football, baseball and wrestling at Miramonte High School. We have also made donations to Sleepy Hollow, Wagner Ranch and Del Rey Auctions over the years,” says Mitchell.

Orinda Shell Auto Care is a longtime member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. They are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Shuttles are available to and from home, as well as to BART. For information, call Kathy Mitchell at 254-1486 or email orindashell@aol.com.

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SALLY HOGARTY

Tee Hayder and his father Dhia recently opened Orinda's newest restaurant.

Turquoise Mediterranean Grill

Father and son team Dhia and Tee Hayder opened the doors of their Turquoise Mediterranean Grill on October 8 to an enthusiastic crowd of new customers who showed their appreciation by delivering flowers to the new business owners. The grill is located in the former Royal Ground space at 70 Moraga Way. "I have been waiting and waiting for you to open," exclaimed Widgie Hastings, a local who is a videographer for the Orinda Historical Society. "I am so glad you are here."

The space has been transformed by the Hayders, who have installed 6-inch terra cotta tiles for the flooring and aqua blue and white tiles for the walls. Several recessed lights and hanging silver pendant lights create a welcoming, and very bright and vibrant space. The Hayders have more than 15 years of experience in the restaurant business as owners of Mediterranean Grills in Palo Alto and Berkeley. Residents of Lafayette, the Hayders felt Orinda was a natural choice for their next venture.

"Everything is homemade here. Whatever your order, it is made fresh that day, including dolmeh. Nothing is kept

overnight," says Tee. His father Dhia, who cooks alongside him, is originally from Turkey. In fact, the Hayders chose the name Turquoise for their restaurant as a way of referencing their Turkish heritage.

The simple and mouth-watering menu includes a vegetarian plate, and meat or fish plates served with vegetables and side dish choices such as Baba Gannouge (a name you'll like saying out loud), which is a delicious spread of pureed eggplant with garlic, olive oil, lemon and spices, salad, hummus or potato salad. Grilled kabob, grilled chicken, grilled salmon and falafel are available with tabouleh, rice with tabouleh, or salad.

Tee happily offers Lor white cheese as a specialty item. "Lor is a city in Turkey famous for its cheese that is homemade from 2 percent milk. It is served two different ways, as a spread or in a block, feta style. We like to add it as a topping to toast or on a bagel," he says.

Although Mediterranean is in its name, the restaurant also offers hamburger, rib-eye steak and fries. Tee recommends the quick and tasty Pit-Za, a mixture of ground beef, onion, garlic, parsley and spices spooned into sliced pita bread. The usual beverage offerings include soda, iced tea, vitamin waters and mineral water. In a nod of respect to Royal Ground, coffee is available for customers who are nostalgic for Royal Ground and its place in local history.

"The community here is great. The City of Orinda and the Contra Costa County Health Department were terrific to work with. We are very open to feedback and suggestions from our customers and encourage them to email us at turqgrill@yahoo.com," says Tee.

The Turquoise Mediterranean Grill is open seven days a week; from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Calling ahead for take-out orders is appreciated. Keep an eye on this one, as the menu is evolving. For more information, call 253-2004.

Village Pizza

Since 1984, Village Pizza has been a local icon for family-style Italian dining in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Arguably home to the best pizza in these parts, much of its success is owed to the wealth of authentic Italian recipes passed down from evening manager Jason Ehrich's great-grandmother, Rose DiPietro. Another element in its success is the first rate customer service provided by DiPietro's son-in-law, founder Joseph DiSano. Although DiSano has opted for retirement, the excellent

customer service of Village Pizza continues under new owner Louis Jones, a 22- to 24-year resident of Orinda.

"I brought my children to Village Pizza when they were growing up, and the legacy of the place has always been attractive to me. These recipes go way back to Italy and originate with DiSano's mother-in-law. Mrs. DePietro arrived in the U.S. when she was 16 years old. DiSano's wife, Adelaide, then added her own tried and true recipes to the menu," explains Jones. He likes to

[SEE BUZZ page 23]



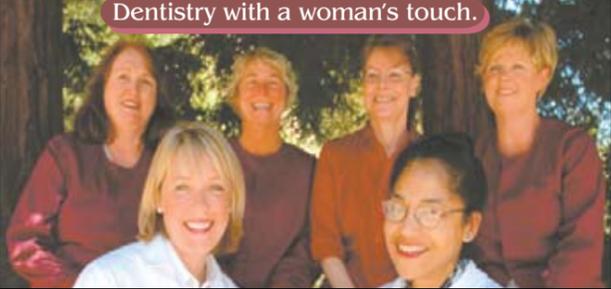
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