

# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
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## Orinda Association Selects Volunteer of the Year and Environmental Award Winner

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

Two stalwarts in the Orinda community have been chosen for the Orinda Association's annual awards. Lucy Hupp Williams will receive Volunteer of the Year honors and Steve Gentry has won the William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award. Both will be honored at a gala dinner at the Orinda Country Club on January 25. For reservations, contact the OA at 254-0800 or go online to [www.orindaassociation.org](http://www.orindaassociation.org).

### Volunteer of the Year

Lucy Hupp Williams has been involved in volunteerism since the age of 12. Her



TERESA LONG  
**Lucy Hupp Williams** (R), shown here with **Kay Norman** at the Historical Society's holiday dinner, has been selected Volunteer of the Year.

## Schools to Go to Voters For New Parcel Tax

By CHRIS LAVIN  
Assistant Editor

Facing huge budget cuts, officials of the Orinda Union School District (OUSD) are planning to go straight to the voters March 3 to ask for a parcel tax to support Orinda's schools. It will cost \$124 per property, supplementing the parcel tax passed in 2003.

"We have to do this," said Riki Sorenson, president of the board of trustees for the district, which serves the four elementary schools and the intermediate school, all of which rank among the top-performing schools in California. Unprecedented state budget cuts to schools will hit core academic programs if the district doesn't secure additional on-going revenue. "We have to invest in education," she said.

The special election for the tax increase, which will require a two-thirds majority to pass, is scheduled for March 3. The ballot measure is not popular with a number of Orinda residents, who believe that any new tax is unfair to senior citizens and encompasses yet another tax without assurances for improvements in education. Others are upset about the costs involved in holding a special election. Costs for the March special election were not available at press time.

According to proponents, however, the tax will simply ensure that ongoing expenses now sustained by the district — such as keeping class sizes low and retaining Orinda teachers' salaries — will help Orinda schools remain at the top in the state. The timing of the special election is due, in part, to the fact that the district is required to notify teachers by March 15 if there will be layoffs the following year. They also point out that an exemption for low-income senior citizens, age 65 or older, is available.

enthusiasm for volunteering grew out of her struggle with polio and having served as a poster child for the March of Dimes.

The atmosphere at her Orinda home certainly influenced Williams toward volunteerism. Her parents, James and Lucie Hupp, were very active in such areas of social concerns as world peace, environmental problems, and conserving natural resources. They were members of Orinda Community Church, where Williams has also volunteered, and helped found the Mt. Diablo Peace Center and the Council for Civic Unity to promote racial harmony.

Williams, who was called Lucy Ann by her mother, remembers learning about organic gardening at her mother's side. An avid organic gardener and teacher, Lucie wrote gardening columns for local publications and was devoted to the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, an interest her daughter has continued, including establishing a memorial garden honoring her mother at the site. She went on to volunteer for numerous Orinda organizations including the Orinda Dramateurs (now Lafayette's Town Hall Theatre), where she met her future husband, Buz Williams.

Although a founding member of the Friends of Wagner Ranch Nature Area,



SALLY HOGARTY  
**Stephen Gentry** holds a tray that was once part of an active beehive. The beekeeper, who is also president of Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, won the William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award.

Williams has focused her considerable energy to increase the resources and visibility of the Orinda Historical Society. A member since 1998 and currently president,

Williams worked tirelessly, despite health problems, to establish a museum at the Historical Society's space in the Orinda

[SEE VOLUNTEER page 6]

## Local Groups Adopt Over 75 Families This Holiday Season

A rainy Sunday did not stop Matthew Barber, Daniel Martis, and Matt Duncan (standing) and Annik, Sue Ellen, and Michaela Thomas (kneeling) from loading the Adopt-A-Family truck full of donations at Santa Maria Church. The young volunteers, along with others from Catholic Youth Organization and local Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops as well as Santa Maria Church, and the City of Orinda solicited donations to make the holidays special for over 75 families from the Pittsburg area. The families helped by the program are from St. Peter Martyr Parish, a largely Hispanic community.



SALLY HOGARTY

## Developer Incorporates Residents' Ideas Into Senior Housing Project

By IAN HEETDERKS  
Staff Writer

After several years of preparation, plans are in the works for a new senior housing complex that will occupy the site of the old Orinda library on Irwin Way. The idea for the project first came to light in 2000. After accepting applications from several firms the City of Orinda settled on Eden Housing, a non-profit that specializes in developing low-income housing facilities. Eden was picked for its history of social consciousness, and its philosophies on management and resident services. Head-

ing up the project is Woody Karp, himself an Orinda resident. He aims to involve any and all members of the community who want to share their views on how the facility should develop.

"Input from the community is an important part of the process," Karp said, "because it stands to effect them as well." To this end, he has already met with several of the project's future neighbors, among them the Orinda Community Church and the Orinda Senior Village. They requested alternate means for seniors to access

[SEE HOUSING page 6]

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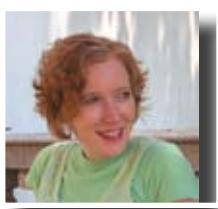
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## BACKYARD GETAWAYS

**Backyard Getaways and Beyond**

Carmel on the Other Side of the Road

**Moya Stone**

**W**hen I want to get away for a few days my favorite destination is Carmel. A short two-hour drive south, it's far enough but not too far. When we think of this charming village by the sea, we think of the beach, the restaurants, the shopping, and golf. But there is so much more, like live theater, a walking trail that leads to the Carmel Mission, and fabulous locally owned shops off the main drag. On a recent visit, I set out to discover some of the little-known treasures of Carmel-by-the-sea.

**The Beach**

OK, so we all know the beach. But have you ever stopped and just watched what's going on? Nothing is more fun than watching the vast array of dogs running, chasing, jumping and barking at the waves. The happiest creatures on earth are at Carmel beach and the town is very dog-friendly. If you like to travel with your pooch, he or she is most welcome at the Cypress Inn. This elegant Mediterranean-style hotel built in 1929 is owned by actress Doris Day and located in the downtown area, or what the locals call The Village.

**The Village**

Downtown isn't called The Village for nothing. The one square mile has an old European feel largely because of the cottage-like architecture developed in the 1920s, but also because of the many (42 to be exact) courtyards and passageways. I recommend getting off the main drag and

exploring the nuances of The Village. For a map of the courtyards, pop into the little antique store, Lily's Chance Discoveries, located in Su Vecino Courtyard between 5th and 6th avenues. Owners Margot Nichols and Francesca Hawthorne will be happy to give you a copy of their map to help navigate the area and pinpoint quality shops, galleries and restaurants.

**The Library**

A quirky little thing I do wherever I travel is find the local library. The Carmel Library is located right in The Village, on Ocean Avenue, and is the place to research all the interesting landmarks and people you are likely to encounter during your stay. One morning on a past visit, my partner and I were enjoying coffee and bagels on the outside patio at Carmel Coffee House. Sitting across from us were two distinguished older gentlemen sporting beards and hats and discussing world politics. One turned out to be local resident Gustavo Arriola, creator of the famous Gordo comic strip. That same afternoon we popped into the library and looked at some of the biographies they had on Mr. Arriola. It's also worth a visit to the branch library just a few blocks away on 6th and Mission, which houses the children's room (a good place to visit if you have kids in tow) and the Henry Meade Williams Local History Room. There you will find collections of manuscripts, personal papers, photographs and books relating to the area's history.



RICHARD AIELLO

The ever-popular Jack London's Grill in the heart of Carmel.

**The Theater**

I love theater, so I don't know how all these years I've missed Carmel's Golden Bough Playhouse. Located on Monte Verde Street between 8th and 9th, the building dates back to 1951 and was a movie theater until the early 1990s, when local resident Stephen Moorer took over with his own professional company now called Pacific Repertory Theater. The Playhouse houses two theaters – The Golden Bough seats 300 and shows musicals and large-scale productions and the Circle Theater seats 90 and shows classic dramas, new works, and experimental scripts. Shows typically run Thursdays through Sunday matinees. Check out their season online before you go or take a walk through the neighborhood and stop by the theater.

**Tor House & Hawk Tower**

In 1919, poet Robinson Jeffers and his

wife completed their Carmel home overlooking the ocean on Ocean View Avenue. Built of granite boulders from the shore, the couple called their humble abode Tor House. It soon became the cultural hotspot, hosting modern celebrities such as Edna St. Vincent Millay, George Gershwin and Charles Lindbergh. The Hawk Tower was built five years later and served as a writing space for Jeffers. Today, Tor House and Hawk Tower is a National Historic Landmark and open to the public for tours on Fridays and Saturdays. After you tour the house, don't forget to visit the library and look up some of Jeffers' poetry!

**The Eats**

I have a restricted diet, which is basically vegan, and that can be challenging on the road. Inside Su Vecino Courtyard, I hit the vegan jackpot at an unlikely place called

[SEE BACKYARD page 18]

Happy New Year!  
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## ORINDA ASSOCIATION

## Orinda Association Begins New Year With a New President and a New Board Member

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

The Orinda Association starts off the New Year with a re-organization of officers and the welcoming of a new board member.

**President Barnaby Beck**

A board member for over a year, Barnaby Beck assumes the presidency of the organization this January. "Kate Wiley and Jim Luini have carried the torch for a long time as co-presidents. It was time for someone else to step up and help out," says Beck. The new president is no stranger to volunteerism. He is a long-time Guardsman, a national organization that raises money to send needy children to camp, and secretary for Oakland Strokes.

Beck and his wife Karen run HLW Work-space Solutions, Inc. The local company helps large corporations liquidate assets. Given today's economy, the small business does not lack clients. They have three children: 27-year-old Summer; 19-year-old Courtney, a sophomore at UC Santa Cruz, and Brittany, a senior at Miramonte High School.



SALLY HOGARTY  
**Barnaby Beck** is the OA's new president.

The new president hopes to increase the OA's branding during his term. "I'd like to narrow the organization's focus and find ways to gain recognition for all they do," he explains. "Everyone loves the 4th of July festivities, but not everyone knows that the OA makes it happen. It would be great to have some sort of signature event – like a ball or cruise – that would strengthen people's identification with the OA and also raise money for our many nonprofit activities."

**Board Member Chris Laszcz-Davis**

New board member Chris Laszcz-Davis has lived in Orinda with her family for more than 20 years. "There is so much untapped potential to get things done within our community with our incredibly talented



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
**Chris Laszcz-Davis** recently joined the board of the Orinda Association.

and creative Orinda families," says Laszcz-Davis. "I'd like to be part of the process to explore what more the Orinda Association can do to support our families, who co-exist in the full cycle of singles, couples, young children, empty nesters and seniors. I'd like to explore how we can even have some real fun as a community doing it."

Laszcz-Davis' business career includes working for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission in Washington, D.C., before moving to the West Coast as the regional manager for the Department of Energy's environmental health, industrial hygiene and medical programs. Currently, she

### Gala Awards Dinner January 25 at 6 p.m.

Honoring  
Lucy Hupp Williams,  
Volunteer of the Year  
and  
Steve Gentry,  
William Penn Mott, Jr.  
Environmental Award  
Winner

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runs her own company, which provides environmental, health and safety consulting services to companies and finds time to lecture at UC Berkeley's Center for Occupational Health and Safety.

The busy mother of two was also very involved with Miramonte High School when her two children attended. Lauren, a 2004 graduate of Miramonte, received her degree in international business this past spring from Loyola Marymount while Grant, a 2007 Miramonte graduate, is a sophomore at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Laszcz-Davis is also involved with community emergency response and became a certified Community Emergency Response Team volunteer. Her husband, Stephen

Davis, is partner at LaCroixDavis, LLC in Lafayette, a firm specializing in both building and environmental forensics and environmental health and safety consulting.

Laszcz-Davis is looking forward to her tenure on the OA board: "I'd like to give back to this special community in which we've resided for well over 20 years, this community in which we've made fine friends, sent our kids to its terrific schools, raised our children and generally had a good time. It's the kind of community that many of our high school graduates hope to return to when considering raising their own families at some point in the future."

**The Orinda Association**

The Orinda Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to:

- Maintaining and improving the quality of life in Orinda;
- Promoting awareness and discussion of issues that are important to the community;
- Encouraging and recognizing volunteer efforts to enhance the beauty, character, and security of Orinda.

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## EDITORIAL

*Guest Editorial***Winter Nights Program Continues**

**O**n this anniversary of Pearl Harbor Day, another anniversary should be noted that is perhaps closer to Orindans and is certainly closer to residents of Contra Costa County. This is the five year anniversary of the Orinda City Council's attempt to expedite use of the old Orinda Library as a temporary shelter for homeless folks during winter months. That benevolent effort prompted a response to prevent such use, as I recall based at least in part on the failure of the council to follow procedural laws (e.g., relating to notice of meetings), resulting in withdrawal of the application.

One might ask, "what has been provided to help the homeless of Contra Costa County in the past five years? First, the homeless situation in Contra Costa County has not disappeared; rather, on any given night over 4,000 people are homeless, many are children, seniors, and the disabled; and obvious current economic events result in more folks becoming homeless. Second, failing in that 2003 attempt to obtain timely access to the old Orinda Library to house the homeless, the applicant (Winter Nights,

part of the Interfaith Council of CCC) has over these five years enlisted various religious congregations in the county to house homeless families during the seven colder months, until a homeless family becomes employed and able to obtain housing. Currently, via these volunteer congregations and absent a more permanent location Winter Nights' trucks furnishings and clients' personal items from congregation to congregation each week, and uses congregational kitchens to feed the homeless clients and congregational rooms for tutoring and child care. Volunteer work includes a Pre-School Literacy Project, with an AmeriCorps teacher, and an education specialist, helping these homeless children to grow in educational skills. These volunteer professionals are assisted by other volunteers: a social worker, a transportation team, an executive director, and hundreds of others at the host congregations.

However, in this time of economic distress for everyone, it is not surprising that the Winter Nights' income budget is currently being tightly stretched. With addi-



tional support from the community, Winter Nights will be able to help more folks as the impact of the present financial crisis hits the county harder and harder.

Thus, despite this successful action taken by these volunteers, the Winter Nights program is making another public appeal for support. Meanwhile, the old Orinda Li-

brary still stands empty and idle as it awaits demolition. As county and state funding is being cut, this necessary and volunteer-based program needs your support. Send contributions to the Interfaith Council of CCC (for Winters Nights Shelter), 1543 Sunnyvale Ave, Walnut Creek, CA 94597.

— Chet Martine, Orinda Volunteer

**Letters to the Editor****Surprise Support for Prop 8**

I was proud to see that a majority of Orinda residents did not support the religious right sponsored Proposition 8 initiative. It's nice that here in Orinda we also value diversity and support civil rights for all members of the community. However, a quick glance at Prop 8 campaign records reveals that our Mayor Pro-Tem, Sue Severson, contributed \$5,000 to the Yes on 8 campaign. This is the largest single contribution to the Yes on 8 campaign from an Orinda resident! Shame on her. I wonder if Orindians are aware of her extreme, out-of-touch political views, something we will keep in mind during her re-election campaign.

— Ken Brunt

**Correction of Montelindo Article**

The Montelindo Garden Club has done an excellent job maintaining the Orinda Crossroads Mini-Park, as described in the December 2008 issue of *The Orinda News*. However, contrary to what was stated, with few exceptions they are not replacing non-native plants with native plants. The original garden consisted of irrigated lawn and was completely replaced about 15 years ago with a water-conserving garden of native plants. The plants installed since then, while very attractive, are largely of Mediterranean and Australian origin.

— Bill Brown

**Who's editing your editor?**

Sally Hogarty should learn the difference between "eminent" (which she used in her article on Orinda robbery suspects) and

"imminent."

I'll be pleased to learn that a review of *Strunk and White's Elements of Style* is imminent.

— Jeffrey Segall

**OUSD Parcel Tax**

In every community there are, by definition, special interest groups: the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the homeowners, the renters, the commuters, the non-commuters, the business owners, the employees, the students, the graduates. If every special interest group voted only for those proposals that directly benefited them, we would have legislative gridlock. We would rarely get the vote needed to pass a proposal. As a result, our communities would crumble. We must look beyond our own special needs and ask ourselves "Does this proposed tax make sense for the good of the community?" If the answer is "yes," then the vast majority of people will benefit in the long run from the passage of such tax. Do I benefit from spending on parks, schools, highways, public transit systems, etc. even if I never or rarely use those specific amenities? You bet I do. They make my community a more attractive place to live, which in turn makes my home more valuable, my neighbors more compatible and my community a safer place for my children and me to live. So before you vote "no" on a tax, look at the big picture.

— Steve Catton

**No More Money**

Irresponsible and miserably timed is the best way to describe the Orinda Union School District's proposal to increase

Orinda's property tax.

In a special election scheduled for March 2009, the district wants to increase the current property (parcel) tax of \$385 by 32 percent! The new tax, if passed by a two-thirds vote, will require Orinda property owners to pay \$509 annually.

The tax comes at a particularly bad time. Many Orinda residents have stock portfolios that, in the last few months, have dropped by 40 to 50 percent. Unemployment is rising sharply.

Senior citizens, most of whom live on fixed incomes, would be devastated by the tax. Many seniors have lost money in the stock market. Seniors also have to pay sharply higher prices for health care and food.

The proposed tax should offer -- but does not -- a complete property-tax exemption for senior citizens. A few years ago, when the Acalanes high school district wanted a higher property tax, senior citizens were offered an exemption.

The Orinda school district has not stated what specific benefits, if any, Orinda residents would receive from the tax.

The district should have promised to change teachers' pay schedules if the tax were to pass. The district has had difficulty recruiting and retaining mathematics and science teachers. If the district offered market-based teachers' salaries, instead of the current egalitarian pay structure, perhaps the tax would be worth considering. But the Board of Trustees of the district lacked the courage or ability to challenge the powerful teachers union.

Voters should reject the proposed tax because it harms senior citizens, comes at

a time of high unemployment and falling stock prices, and fails to change the way teachers are compensated.

— Richard S. Colman

**Setting the Record Straight**

I am saddened to see Mr. Richard Colman's letter to the editor regarding the Orinda Union School District's decision to place a parcel tax on the ballot. So often, these days political opposition comes in the form of deceit and exaggeration rather than honest discourse.

On November 18th, Mr. Colman called me, as president of the Board of Trustees, and we shared a lengthy conversation about the unprecedented fiscal crisis facing our schools. I was very detailed in elaborating how both the current and the proposed parcel tax do include senior exemptions for low-income seniors.

So for Mr. Colman to write that "The Orinda school district could have — but did not — offer a tax exemption to senior citizens" is a deliberate falsehood, and he knows it.

In a time of enormous uncertainty, Orinda schools are facing huge budget cuts this year, with even more crippling cuts proposed for next year. We must take action to preserve our quality educational programs. Though nobody likes to raise taxes, we can maintain local control over these funds to ensure they go directly toward essential academic programs.

Mr. Colman does a disservice to voters by ignoring the fact that this important measure offers protections for low-income seniors.

— Riki Sorenson  
[SEE LETTERS page 18]

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## POLICE

# Internet Theft a High Crime

By CAROLE GALASSI  
Contributing Writer

**M**any have done it. It's much too easy nowadays to copy images from Internet websites. Most people do it without permission from the website owner or stock photo company. If you're thinking about doing it, think again.

Having been a victim of others copying my work, my design, and words, I understand the feelings and violation of one's original work being given credit by someone else. It is distasteful and makes me angry. But what can really be done about it? The Internet is so vast and wide that it is difficult for someone to police the text or images and to control what is being



DAVE GALASSI

**Carole Galassi** at her home office where she researched Internet thievery.

plagiarized or downloaded illegally.

Even in doing my research for this story, I performed a search on Google for "copying images on the Internet," and all results displayed showed me how to accomplish this. None really spoke about not doing it. Therefore, this story is not about the specific laws for copyrighting or the robbery prevalent on the web. It is about real-life experience and ethics.

It is better to err on the side of caution. Do not copy anything from the Internet unless it specifically indicates that it is okay

to do so, or if site administrators provide terms asking you to create a link back to the image owner's site. You also want to make sure that you take a snapshot of the website's page giving permission for you to download or copy images. You never know if their policy may change in a few years, and you don't want to get into a situation that leaves you without documentation of their approval.

There are a large number of stock photo companies on the web today. These companies have their terms of usage agreement on the website. However, if you're like me, it's often difficult to understand the legal jargon on these long contracts. I have known several people who have been fined a large sum of money for copying images from these large stock photo companies.

In case you are not familiar with why these stock companies allow you to register and then download images which have their watermark on the corner of the photo, it's mainly to be used for "comping" purposes only. "Compung" refers to the process of drafting a design and using the image with the hope of purchasing that image when it's distributed publicly.

In speaking with one stock photo company, I was informed that they have software to comb the Internet a section at a time to find violators of their usage terms. If you have a website that is indexed by Google, it is considered to be a live website to the stock photo company. So if you have unlicensed photos on that website, you are open to being fined and are in violation of their terms. They come up with a list of violators regularly who use their images for websites and print illegally. This is the sophistication of software and Internet technology that we are in and continue to head toward. Once you get a letter from a company's legal department, you must produce written documentation on your license to use the images or pay the fine indicated in their demand letter. If you do not have a license, they may demand that you pay the fine and remove the images within a certain timeframe.

The safest thing to do is to purchase your images from a stock photo company. There are many inexpensive companies that offer

[SEE INTERNET page 8]



## POLICE BLOTTER

November 2008

**Strongarm Robbery:** 1 incident.  
**Domestic Violence:** 2 incidents.

**Arrests**

**Robbery - Strongarm:** 1

**Warrant Arrests:** 4

**Drugs - Under Influence:** 1

**Commercial Burglary:** 1

**Drunk in Public:** 2

**Domestic Violence:** 2

**Vandalism:** 1

**Driving Under the Influence:** 1

**Possession of Dangerous Drugs:** 1

**Other Misdemeanor:** 1

– Compiled by Jeanette Irving,  
Orinda Police Department

## L. J. Wilson Construction

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### ◆ VOLUNTEER from page 1

Library. "Orinda needed it and you have to start somewhere," she explains, adding that the Orinda Rotary helped purchase the various cabinets used to house Orinda's rich history.

Toris Jaeger, naturalist at Wagner Ranch Nature Area, thinks Williams is the perfect choice for this year's Volunteer of the Year award, "Williams' efforts with the historical archives of Orinda to ensure their preservation is just astonishing." Orinda resident Katharine Barrett agrees, "Lucy inspires others to step up and volunteer with her to make Orinda a better place for our children."

### William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award

Known as the "bee man," Steve Gentry has educated many thousands of people about the importance of these little creatures to the survival of our environment. "Without bees, the world would be a very different place," he says.

Gentry should know. A descendent of many generations of local farmers, he saw first-hand the role of bees in agriculture. "My great-grandfather farmed along San Pablo Creek just this side of the reservoir in the 1870s and my grandfather had a farm where Saint Mary's College stands today," he explains.

Although Gentry was stung "too many times to count" in his first beekeeping years, the episodes have lessened significantly over the years. "Maybe there is a Zen to beekeeping, sort of like the horse whisperer idea," he postulates. "I know that I now have a level of consciousness when I'm working with the bees, a certain way of moving, and I don't get stung nearly as often."

Gentry saw his first beehive on a Boy Scout trip when he was around 12 years old to the Natural Science building at Lake Merritt. "I was thunderstruck by the hive, and it stayed with me," he says. When attending an exhibition of honeybees at the Peace Center in Walnut Creek's Larkey Park in his early 30s, Gentry was once again amazed at how gentle the bees were. He shared telephone numbers with others at the exhibit and soon purchased his first beehive. The people he met at the exhibition

began to share knowledge and equipment and soon evolved into the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association, now the largest club of its kind in the West.

In his quest to educate others on the importance of bees, Gentry has spoken at many garden and Rotary clubs and even takes live beehives to elementary classes. In early December, Gentry installed a 6-foot high observational beehive in UC Berkeley's Botanical Garden, similar to the hive that first caught a young scout's attention in Oakland.

Gentry's interest in bees translates to an overwhelming interest in preserving our environment. A self-proclaimed "foody," Gentry has been on the board of directors for the Contra Costa Farmers' Market, lobbying for organic foods and farming that sustains the environment.

The Orinda resident began volunteering at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area in 1990. He has supervised the planting of over 34 trees, built drip irrigation systems, coordinated volunteers, and helped start Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area. Currently president of the Friends, Gentry's 1939 GMC truck has become the nature area's mascot and can be seen each 4th of July in the parade.

state's per-student funding for the district.

According to OUSD officials, the current property tax, passed in 2003, is a flat tax of \$385. It does not take into account inflation, not to mention budget cuts from Sacramento. Just to keep pace with inflation, the 2003 tax would need to be increased to \$460. The 2003 parcel tax helped bring Orinda teachers' salaries to the Contra Costa and Alameda County averages, but this year, the district has lost ground and salaries are, once again, below the average. In addition, classroom supply budgets were cut and several maintenance positions were eliminated this year to keep expenses down.

Although the state budget is currently in place, the governor's proposal for mid-year cuts could mean a loss of an additional \$700,000 to OUSD. These proposed mid-year cuts, taken together with cuts sustained at the start of the school year, would represent a loss of roughly 10 percent of the

### ◆ OUSD from page 1

The OUSD encompasses the four elementary schools – Del Rey, Glorietta, Wagner Ranch and Sleepy Hollow – as well as Orinda Intermediate School. The district's annual budget is \$22.1 million. Of this, \$15.1 million comes from the state, \$342,000 from the federal government, \$2.7 million from the current parcel tax, \$3 million from the Educational Foundation of Orinda and Parents Clubs, and \$1 million from other sources. As costs go up, state funding has gone down.

Although the state budget is currently in place, the governor's proposal for mid-year cuts could mean a loss of an additional \$700,000 to OUSD. These proposed mid-year cuts, taken together with cuts sustained at the start of the school year, would represent a loss of roughly 10 percent of the

### ◆ HOUSING from page 1

downtown Orinda, which is conveniently close but requires a trek down the very steep Irwin Way. To this end, a path has been incorporated into the design that will run along the border of the property line adjacent to the Orinda park, to make a more pleasant and convenient route for seniors to take. Plans are also in place to add a sidewalk to Irwin Way.

Eden Housing was selected for the project as recently as October, so it is still in its beginning stages. Currently, the facility is planned to house 55 units for independent seniors. Karp has started on the long process of securing financing, which he isn't expecting to finalize until the spring. However, he remains confident that with the help of the Orinda community, Eden Housing's senior housing facility will become an asset to the city's senior population, and the community as a whole.

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## AUTHORS

**Heartfelt Book Gives Hope of Redemption**

By FRAN MILLER  
Contributing Writer

**W**hen Oakland resident Jan Stites' gripping story about life at an inner city psychiatric hospital garnered no interest from commercial publishing companies, she decided to take matters into her own hands.

"I'd been working on my book for 13 years and was saddened that it might have no life beyond being a manuscript on my shelf," says Stites, whose literary agent was told that the book would be "midlist," meaning, not a bestseller. "The big book retailers control so much of the market, and they only want bestsellers. They weren't willing to gamble on an unknown author without a built-in audience."

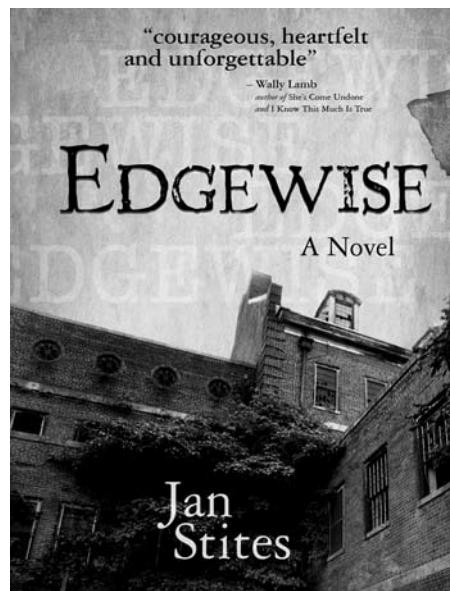
So Stites decided to self-publish. "The hardest part was making design decisions such as font, cover design and page layout, for which I had no particular talent. Ultimately, it was exhilarating. Authors normally do not have such personal input in the design and overall look of their book. I learned so much about the process. It

was worth it."

The final result is *Edgewise*, a work of fiction involving interracial and interclass dynamics at an outpatient hospital in Oakland. National best-selling author Wally Lamb describes the book as "courageous, heartfelt and unforgettable – a harrowing story of injury and feeling, despair and hope." The novel draws from Stites' own experience as a participant in outpatient therapy.

"I believed that others in my therapy program would be professionals like me, and we would be situated in a garden-like setting," says Stites. "The reality was a concrete jungle with mostly poor, under-educated street people. While at first I was horrified, ultimately I found that we had much in common. My fellow patients had keen insights and a vast capacity to give. I left transformed, and drew from my experiences for *Edgewise*."

*Edgewise* follows the life of fictional Simone, a popular but troubled high school teacher, and her participation as the only Caucasian in an inner city psychiatric hospital. Her resulting tumultuous friendship



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Author Jan Stites read from her book *Edgewise* at Orinda Books in early December. Copies of the book are available at the local bookstore.

with a woman her polar opposite propels them both to uncover truths about their pasts. It is a story of love, abuse, and the hope of redemption.

Annette O'Connor of Orinda Books – where Stites recently appeared for a reading – calls *Edgewise* "authentic and realistic in describing a fairly desperate situation." Stites appreciates the visibility that Orinda Books has provided. Says Stites, "Orinda Books has been incredibly supportive. Independent bookstores are really the

only avenue for small or self-published books because they will carry unknown authors, and they take the time to build word of mouth and momentum. The first bestseller list on which *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* appeared was that of the Northern California Independent Booksellers."

The appreciation is mutual, according to those at Orinda Books. "We enjoy featuring local authors and introducing them to

[SEE EDGEWISE page 8]

**Author Provides Action Plan for Harried Families**

By FRAN MILLER  
Contributing Writer

**F**or many Lamorinda families, the weekly schedule is crammed with homework, sports practice, music practice, play dates, meetings, book group, workouts, grocery shopping, household chores, and much more. As we struggle to catch our breath, one East Bay resident is urging us to ask ourselves, "How did we get here, and what are our priorities?"

In his new book, *The 3 Big Questions for a Frantic Family, A Leadership Fable About Restoring Sanity to the Most Important Organization in Your Life*, nationally recognized best-selling business author and Alamo resident Pat Lencioni dissects the motivation behind our harried lives and provides an action plan for a return to sanity.

Lencioni has dedicated his career to helping companies and organizations become healthier and more successful, and in *The 3 Big Questions for a Frantic Family*, he seeks to apply the same business acumen to family life. Following his highly acclaimed business fable format (*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, and *The Three Signs of a Miserable Job*) Lencioni fictionalizes

a harried family to which the reader can relate: Married couple Theresa and Jude, overwhelmed with managing a family of six, live in a constant state of chaos. When Jude states, "If my clients ran their companies the way we run this family, they'd be out of business," Theresa decides to apply the methodologies used in her husband's consulting practice to her own family.

The book explains how to use the business model to organize family life, and provides real-life case studies of those who have successfully employed it. Lencioni suggests that when readers thoughtfully answer the three big questions in the book's title, a calmer and saner family life will follow. The questions: 1) What makes your family unique? The answer should be two or three sentences describing how your family is different from any other family in the world; 2) What is your top priority (your rallying cry) right now and what are your objectives? The rallying cry is a single, agreed-upon top priority for your family over the next two to six months. Define objectives as to what you will do to achieve your rallying cry. Set standard objectives – perennial responsibilities – to which you must pay attention in order to stay above

[SEE FAMILY page 8]

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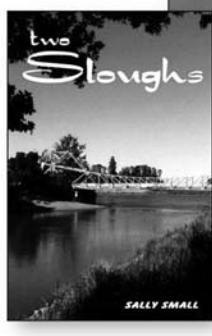
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## AUTOMOTIVE ADVISER

**AUTOMOTIVE ADVISER**

What To Do About Dealership Service  
For Your Hard-working Car

**John Vanek**



There is a growing concern about having your car serviced at the dealership. The No. 1 concern is the fact that automotive franchise dealerships are closing in record numbers. Local dealers in Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Concord, Oakland and Vallejo have recently closed their doors, and there will be no dealerships there to replace them. Unfortunately, due to the current economic crisis, there will be more dealerships closing in the near future. This is a national crisis. One out of 30 new car dealerships will be out of business by the end of this year alone, with 1,000 expected to fail in 2009. This makes it difficult to have faith in reliable and consistent service when you are worried about driving into an empty dealership. It also makes it difficult to form a longtime relationship with a company whose own existence is in question.

Obviously, times have changed. Some motorists remember when car dealerships

were family owned, and you could count on the same faces every time you brought your car in. Today, we have become accustomed to a corporate world in which the personal approach has given way to profits. Larger corporate owners that run multiple dealerships have scooped the Ma and Pa dealerships up. When they take over a dealer, they usually release the existing staff and hire a new crew to lower labor costs and avoid paying union benefits. When the corporation cannot service their debt, the dealer will close down. Times are tough, and people need to have a trust and comfort level with the facility that services their vehicle.

The other concern motorists have is the need to keep their factory warranty valid. Many motorists are given the impression that they are required to return to the dealership for servicing until the vehicle is out of warranty. This is far from the truth. As a matter of fact, federal law states that a

manufacturer cannot deny any warranty claim due to maintenance being performed by an independent repair shop. It is illegal for a dealer to state or imply that they to need to perform services to keep the warranty valid. The point is to continue servicing your vehicle as recommended by the manufacturer. There are many independent repair facilities that are qualified to perform the required maintenance. Some modern independent repair shops believe in training their technicians and investing in today's high tech equipment.

Many motorists feel that it is not necessary to follow the factory guidelines. If you look in your owner's manual, you will find that many of the services include specific inspections or lubrications that are simple but crucial to your car's reliability. It is important to keep your maintenance log up

to date and keep records of your service history. This will satisfy the manufacturer's maintenance requirement, and your power train will continue to be covered under the factory warranty.

The bottom line is that you should take your vehicle to an established company with a long track record. Do research on the business before you use them. Have a conversation with the management of the business first and make sure they have confidence in working on your kind of vehicle. Build a relationship based on trust and respect. Check your owner's manual and have a good understanding of what needs to be done to your vehicle. Whatever repair shop you choose, be sure that you are an educated consumer and that you are very much a part of the process.

## ◆ FAMILY from page 7

water; 3) How do you talk about and use the answers to these questions? Discuss your answers regularly and maintain a steady dialogue and review.

As a husband and father of four, Lencioni practices what he preaches and has found great power and relief in applying these simple strategic concepts to managing his own family.

Lencioni is the author of eight best-selling books with more than 2.5 million copies sold. The Wall Street Journal has named him one of the most in-demand business speakers in the nation. Lencioni's work has been featured in numerous publications such as Fast Company, INC Magazine, USA Today, Fortune, Drucker Foundation's Leader to Leader, and Harvard Business Review.

*The 3 Big Questions for a Frantic Family* can be purchased at Orinda Books.

## ◆ INTERNET from page 5

reasonable rates per photo. I have found that [www.dreamstime.com](http://www.dreamstime.com) offers one of the best packages with the largest amount of variety. If you are unsure of the terms, contact the stock photo company and speak with a representative to make sure you are clear on how you are able to use the photos you buy.

Another alternative is to take your own photos and use them on your website or print material. Of course, you will then risk people copying your own images. Make sure you put a watermark or statement on your website regarding the copying of your images, that they are not permissible to use. If you do allow copying, then state that as well.

If you're not sure whether an image is openly available, don't use it. It's not worth the aggravation and headache you later may face.

## ◆ EDGEWISE from page 7

our loyal customers and the more than 100 book groups associated with our store," says O'Connor.

Stites taught high school in Alamo for 13 years. Prior to that she taught screenwriting at San Francisco State and University of California-Berkeley Extension. She has written for *The Village Voice*, co-authored *Diver's Guide to the Caribbean*, and has optioned three film projects.

"It was very empowering to bring this book to fruition on my own," says Stites. "I learned to not rush the process, and that taking time to ponder all decisions was essential. As is true for anything in life!"

If you missed Stites' December 6 reading from *Edgewise* at Orinda Books, you can catch her at The Berkeley City Club on Thursday, January 29 at 7 p.m., 510-848-7800. She is also available for book group appearances. Contact her at [janstites@aol.com](mailto:janstites@aol.com). *Edgewise* is available for purchase at Orinda Books.

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# ORINDA MOTORS

## GALLERY

# Get Inspired at Orinda Library Gallery Show Opening January 3

By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer

**B**eginning Saturday, January 3, you can check out the new show hung at the Orinda Library Gallery, which includes area artists Joan Yao, Robbin Milne and Carole Dwinell. If you attend their opening reception on Sunday, January 4, from 3 to 5 p.m., add live chamber music and hors d'oeuvres to your list of delights. The show runs until Saturday, January 31.

#### Oil Painter and Charcoal Drawing Artist Robbin Milne

Robbin Milne paints figurative and abstract oil paintings, as well as charcoal drawings on newspaper, at her Benicia studio. An English major, Milne found that she could say more in her paintings, even though she always includes writing in her work, sometimes under layers of paint. She worked with Phyllis Lasche on a collaborative piece where they didn't speak out loud, preferring to communicate through their art as they passed work back and forth over a three-year period. These abstract oil paintings were shown in the Benicia Library Gallery and in Sebastopol – they won Best of Show. See [www.myspace.com/robbinmilne](http://www.myspace.com/robbinmilne) and [www.robbinmilne.com](http://www.robbinmilne.com) for the fascinating range of Milne's work. Her work has also been exhibited at Diablo Valley College (DVC) in the Contra Costa 14 show, the Bedford Gallery, the Benicia Art Gallery, and many other venues.

"For some reason," Milne says, "my works on newspaper are popular now." When you see them, you'll know why – the charcoal drawings on newspaper are almost

portrait-like and will command your attention and pique your interest. Milne hopes to raise awareness among gallery visitors to show there are talented, professional artists working right here in their own back yard.

Milne's grandmother swears the family is related to famous author A.A. Milne, but Milne hasn't done the research to corroborate this. Her family is filled with musicians and writers. Her brother is an accomplished photographer and her oldest son plays saxophone and guitar, and now wants to learn piano.

#### Chinese Brush Painter Joan Yao

Joan Yao's works of Chinese brush painting are in the tradition of Master Dai-Chien Chang (1899-1983), reputed to be the best Chinese brush painter and calligrapher in five generations. Yao was lucky enough to meet Master Chien's granddaughter, Ms. Xiao, when Chien's family first came to America and settled in the area. Ms. Xiao instructed Yao for many years. Often, Ms. Xiao's mother shared important insights with Yao about Master Chien's tradition. This unique Chinese tradition challenges the painter to work from the inside out – always painting the "spirit" of the subject first. Viewing these lyrical works becomes a meditative experience, drawing the viewer into the heart of the painting. Master Chien collaborated with Pablo Picasso when they received an international Gold Medal. Picasso (not noted for his humility) is quoted as saying, "You [Master Chien] are the real master."

Yao has received many prestigious awards including the Northern California 27th Annual Confucius Memorial's Distinguished Teacher Award. Students at her classes in Moraga – ranging in age from five to 93 – have also received distinguished awards in juried competitions nationwide. According to Chien's granddaughter, Yao is the only remaining teacher of Master Chien's discipline in the Bay Area. At various points in her career, she has been invited to give lectures and demonstrations at Northern California schools and universities. She and her nine siblings were all instructed in Chinese calligraphy from the age of five. Yao's wish is to share the legacy of Master Chien's teachings, which exemplify the highest level of Chinese culture, to open people's minds to the grace and power of this precious Eastern tradition.

#### Multi-Talented Artist Carole Dwinell

Carole Dwinell works in clay and bronze, paints in oil, acrylic, watercolors and is also a photographer. For Dwinell, "Clay is very sensuous and even the differences between a sculpture clay mix and porcelain is a delight to the touch." Working the lost wax process for both sculpture and jewelry fascinates her. She feels that the availability of pro-



JOAN YAO  
Joan Yao's Chinese brush paintings are in the tradition of Master DaiChien Chang, reputed to be one of the best Chinese brush painters and calligraphers in five generations.

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ROBBIN MILNE  
Artist Robbin Milne uses many techniques in her work. Here she overlaps charcoal drawings on newspaper creating a unique, interesting portrait.

grams in Orinda for adults is the epitome of encouragement and artistic support. As one who thrives on the element of risk in creating, Dwinell relies on her background in commercial art and her basic ability to draw, which informs all her work. For a time, she was employed at the *Contra Costa Times* and did freelance graphic design for the former Nature Company,



CAROLE DWINELL  
Multi-Colored Sea Turtle Gourd

which included product drawings and lots of wildlife illustrations. Other work included photography for local malls, brochures and advertisements. She loves making beautiful things in whatever form! See [www.caroledwinell.com](http://www.caroledwinell.com) for a taste of Dwinell's creations.

Mark Messenger of DVC gave a class assignment of keeping a creative journal, which has become Dwinell's creative bible. "He encouraged us to record all our ideas, sketches, color swatches, notes, magazine cutouts and what-have-you in it. Well, I'm now on my sixth journal, and it really keeps my work fresh. My motto is 'Choose page, start work, no waiting,'" she explains. Dwinell has exhibited at the diRosa Preserve, the Crocker Gallery in Sacramento, and Walnut Creek Arts Education's bi-annual show.

In her porcelain clay art, Dwinell uses dental tools to carve delicate forms into the clay before it is fired for the first time. She invites gallery viewers to check out one of her finished clay pieces at the Orinda exhibit. Dwinell is a member of the Color Pencil Society of America and the National Gourd Society. Visiting museums and galleries, taking art classes and

[SEE GALLERY page 14]



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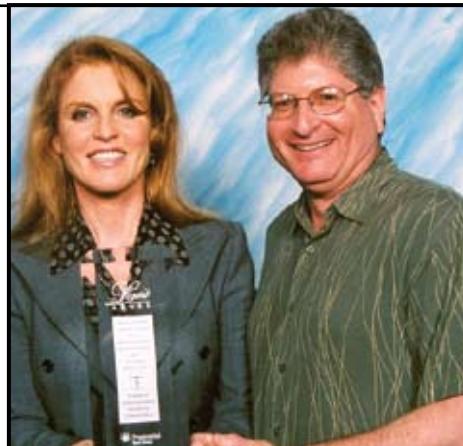
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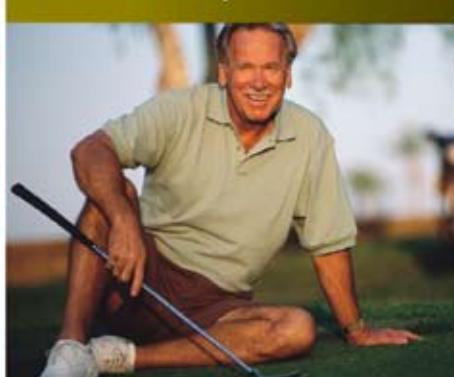


### MAGGIE

Margaret, an avid cyclist, suffered extensive injuries when hit by a car. After several surgeries, she transferred to our care and received intensive medical and rehabilitation services to help regain her ability to care for herself. Margaret is now back home.

### ROGER

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.



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## itch to Stitch

### Sew Your Valentine's Day Cards

Doreen Leong



What better way to unleash your creativity than to make your own unique hand-sewn greeting cards for Valentine's Day? Create these handmade expressions of love with colorful scrapbook paper, embellishments, fabric scraps, and a sewing machine.

Choose papers that are colorful, textural and tactile. Create dimension by layering and sewing the papers together. With such a vast assortment of papers and accessories for making scrapbooks, the possibilities are endless. Add vivid embellishments and your favorite photos to personalize your cards.

We have designed three unique cards to inspire and spark your imagination. We selected decorative papers in tones of soft pink, rose, fuchsia, red, cream and white. We layered and stitched the papers together with contrasting threads to create simple border and quilting designs. We also added colorful ribbons, buttons and brads to enhance our cards.

#### Basic Supply List

- Sewing machine
- Thread
- Scissors
- Cutting board and x-acto knife
- Ruler
- Glue stick
- 1-1/2" heart shaped paper cutter (optional)
- 2" circle shaped paper cutter (optional)
- Base card stock – white, cream, pinks
- Decorative patterned papers in pinks and reds
- Buttons
- Brads
- Rubber stamps for the lettering and ink pad



checkerboard pattern creating nine equally sized squares.

Glue to hold, then zig-zag stitch the white card stock onto the dark rose card stock with pink thread.

Glue the hearts onto the white card stock in alternating patterns in each stitched square.

Attach the white card stock with the hearts to the fuchsia card stock with a decorative brad and ribbon.

#### Heart in a Circle – finished size 6" x 6"

Supplies for 1 card:

- White textured card stock for base layer - cut 6" x 6"
- White textured card stock for 2" diameter round circle shape



#### 9 hearts – finished size 6-1/2" x 6-1/2"

Supplies for 1 card:

- Fuchsia textured card stock for base layer - cut 6-1/2" x 6-1/2"
- Dark rose textured card stock for second layer - cut 6" x 6"
- White textured card stock for top layer - cut 5-1/2" x 5-1/2"
- Decorative velvet flocked paper in fuchsia and red for hearts – cut out 4 heart shapes
- Fuchsia textured card stock for cut out hearts – cut out 4 heart shapes
- Decorative brad in corner to join the front and back cards together
- 3" of colorful ribbon.

Cut the card stock for each layer.

Straight stitch the white card stock in

- Iridescent fuchsia card stock for second layer - cut 5-1/2" x 5-1/2"
- Decorative striped paper cut 2-1/4" w. x 5-1/2" l. – stripes are cut on the horizontal
- Fuchsia velveteen card stock for 1 cut out heart – 1-1/2" heart shape
- 4 decorative brads in corners
- 18" of colorful decorative ribbon.

Cut the card stock for each layer; cut out the heart and circle shapes.

Glue to hold, then zig-zag stitch the striped paper onto the left side of the irides-

[SEE VALENTINE page 14]

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## AROUND TOWN

## Festival of Trees Raises Over \$35,000 for Local Groups



SALLY HOGARTY

The Orinda Woman's Club held its gala Festival of Trees fundraiser at the Blackhawk Museum, raising over \$35,000 to be divided between the Monument Crisis Center and the Child Abuse Prevention Council. A portion of the money will also be used to help teens and young adults in need. The group is currently accepting applications for major beneficiaries of next year's Festival of Trees. Application forms, which are due by March 2, can be obtained by contacting Adeline McClatchie at 254-1162 or via email at [adeline@mcclatchie.com](mailto:adeline@mcclatchie.com).

## Rotary Club Honors Seniors and Youth at Luncheon

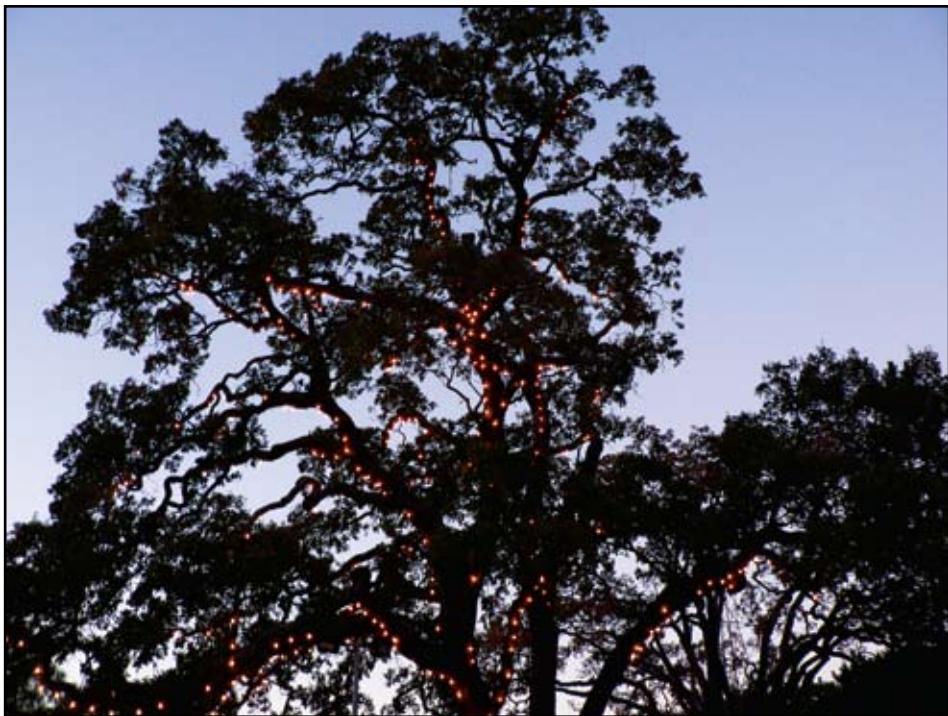


The Orinda Rotary invited seniors from Orinda Senior Village to join the group for a festive lunch in mid-December. Shown to the left are Rotarian **Dick Burkhalter** and **Kay Biondo**. The speaker for the event was **Frank Darling** of Guitars Not Guns. The group, which receives donations from Rotary, offers troubled teens free music lessons and a guitar. Shown below are three of the teachers, who performed at the Rotary luncheon: (L-R) **Randall Davis**, **Sean Riebold**, and Rotarian **Jose Avelar**.



PHOTOS BY SALLY HOGARTY

## Hospice Tree of Lights Draws Large Crowds



ELANA O'LOSKEY

The Chamber of Commerce and Hospice once again combined forces to present a fun tree lighting ceremony that benefits Hospice of Contra Costa County. Choirs from local schools entertained and Santa found time in his busy schedule to stop by and listen to a wish or two.

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## COOKING WELL

**COOKING WELL**

**Essentials of Proper Food Selection, Preparation and Enjoyment**

Chef Charles Vollmar



Welcome to another year filled with challenge, opportunity and hope! A new year filled with lofty resolutions and thoughtful aspirations to eat properly, to exercise regularly, and to strive to find balance between professional and personal obligations. And in this new year, not unlike previous years, you are bombarded with countless messages (often contradictory) encouraging you to regain your focus

and commitment to approach life in a more healthful way. I will put forth my 2 cents – that's my job, and my commitment – to present my insights and hope that something may click and provide a positive influence and encourage change.

Welcome to Cooking Well, a new column dedicated to improving the quality of life and well-being of our residents. Together we will explore food topics, cooking fun-

damentals, nutritional issues, and other related lifestyle enrichment topics. As a professional chef, food educator and father of twin first-graders, I understand the challenges and importance of consistently cooking and eating well. The goals of this column will be to educate, enlighten and encourage readers to be more mindful about food, its selection and enjoyment.

Look forward to content that supports all of our residents: our youngsters, teens, professionals, active adults, athletes, seniors and those with special needs. Look for writing that is timely, applicable and reflects local influences. Look for useful, meaningful messages that will encourage a more thoughtful and informed approach to nourishing yourself and those you care about. Look for recipes that utilize wholesome, seasonal products, are easy to prepare and appeal to a wide variety of tastes (especially the kids). Look to expand your repertoire with new ingredients, ideas and practical applications to make cooking a more intuitive, natural process instead of a rigid, recipe-driven burden. Look for suggestions that provide useful approaches to shopping, meal planning, proper eating habits, and weight management. Look to develop an awareness and appreciation of the origins and processes involved in food production, harvesting and bringing it from market and home.

Over time, we will provide the tools and terminology to establish a base of understanding and skills to make significant, permanent changes to your lifestyle and those who mean the most to you. Understanding that forever is a very long time, and that with anything, commitment comes and goes, my goal is to plant the seeds that will provide you with a center point to gravitate back to should you periodically lose your way.

Are you ready? As a first step, here is a recipe that addresses the idea of including more fish in your diet. This recipe is easy to prepare and fits that "don't have much time to cook" weeknight meal saga. Serve with salad and whole grain bread and you're good to go. This dish is high in protein, rich in omega-3 fatty acids and micronutrients, and low in calories.

*For comments, questions or suggestions feel free to contact the Chef, via email: charlie@epicureanexchange.com or visit www.epicureanexchange.com for more information on programs and classes.*

**Recipe****Stewed Pacific Cod with Tomatoes, Olives and Capers**

This preparation suggests the use of Pacific Cod, a preferred choice of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Guide. Other fishes that work well in this dish include Alaskan Halibut or Sablefish /Black Cod. As with most fish dishes, this is best served just at the point the fish is properly done and enjoyed at one sitting. Unfortunately, preparations such as this do not make very good leftovers.

3 tablespoons pure olive oil  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes, in juice  
4 ounces assorted olives, pitted (suggest olive blends at better markets), coarsely chopped  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves  
2 tablespoons capers, rinsed  
Pinch red pepper flakes  
4 - 4 ounce skinless cod fillets  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons minced Italian flat-leaf parsley  
Extra-virgin olive oil for finishing

- Heat 1 tablespoon pure olive oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and sauté until just fragrant, about 20 seconds. Add the tomatoes with juices, olives, basil, capers and pinch of red pepper flakes. Season with kosher salt



CHARLES VOLLMAR

Pacific Cod with tomatoes, olives and capers makes a nutritious and colorful entree.

and freshly ground black pepper, to taste. Bring to boil and reduce to a simmer. Gently simmer the mixture while fish is being prepared.

- Season the presentation side of cod fillets with kosher salt and freshly ground pepper.

- In a non-stick skillet, heat remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil until just smok-

[SEE COOKING page 18]

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—Gail Mead

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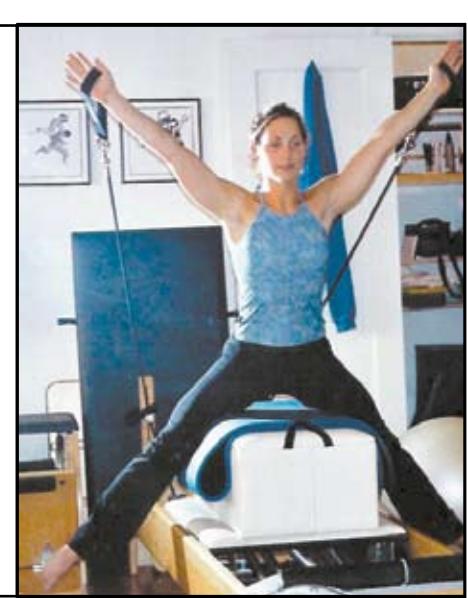
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## ATHLETE / FITNESS

# Jack Nevin, MHS Senior A NorCal Grizzlies All Star

By KSENIJA SOSTER OLMER  
Staff Writer

Lacrosse might seem a poor stepsister to football and waterpolo, but it is alive and well in the Lamorinda community as well as at Miramonte High.

Miramonte High School senior, Jack Nevin, travels to Florida this month as a member of the Under 17 NorCal Grizzlies All Star Lacrosse team to compete at the National Development Program (NDP) high school club championship tournament. Nevin has played the game for eight years and fills the long stick middie position. He serves as co-captain of the Varsity Miramonte Lacrosse team, along with Tim Albo and Harry Forman.

Last winter Nevin's Miramonte coach, Danny Roden, nominated him to the elite northern California all-star team sponsored by California Lacrosse Foundation, which was established in 2004 in order to spread knowledge about the game and provide lacrosse playing opportunities for young athletes. "Jack has an incredible intuition for the game of lacrosse. It has been a pleasure to coach him over the years and watch him develop his skills. It has been great watching him develop from a young inexperienced and quiet freshman to a senior leader and captain this season," says Coach Roden. The competition to get on

this prestigious team was tough – Nevin was one of 100 northern California athletes attending tryouts, and he was gratified to be selected as one of 24 lacrosse players invited to join the Grizzlies. "I've enjoyed making new friends with guys from other Bay Area schools who love lacrosse as much as I do," says Nevin.

The Grizzlies traveled to Colorado in June and captured first place at the Vail Tournament, the most prestigious high school tournament next to the NDP High School national tournament in Tampa, Florida. Taking first place is something the Under 17 division had never before accomplished. "It was an incredible moment when we played in the finals and won the tournament. Several guys grabbed the California Bear flag, and we ran around the stadium to celebrate. I'll never forget sharing that euphoria with my teammates. It was sweet," recalls Nevin.

Representing Miramonte High School, his hometown, and California has made a strong impression on Nevin. He plans to continue playing lacrosse in college either in his home state or back East. He would like to pursue business and environmental studies. He wants to work toward raising awareness about the sport on the West coast. "Lacrosse is extremely well established on the East coast. In fact, Native Americans



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Jack Nevin**, Miramonte senior, made the all-star lacrosse team.

first played the game. They had no defined field and instead, roamed for miles with

[SEE NEVIN page 18]

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SALLY HOGARTY

Stand with your feet shoulder distance apart, holding a food can in each hand with hands by your sides. Lunge diagonally forward with your right foot, crossing it to the outside of your leg, bending both knees 90 degrees.

As you lunge curl dumbbells toward your shoulders. Straighten legs, then lift your right knee and bring it in toward your chest as you lower your arms. Lunge back diagonally with the right leg, crossing leg behind body and to the left, bending both knees while curling weights toward shoulders.

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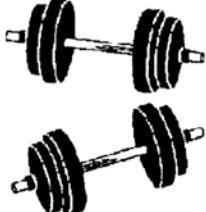
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## ◆ VALENTINES from page 10

cent fuchsia card stock pink thread.

Glue the fuchsia velveteen heart onto the 2" round circle cut from the white card stock.

Place and glue the 2" circle onto the lower right corner of the fuchsia card stock; carefully edge stitch around the circle with pink thread.

Place the fuchsia card stock onto the white card stock; glue to hold and then straight stitch around the 4 sides with pink thread.

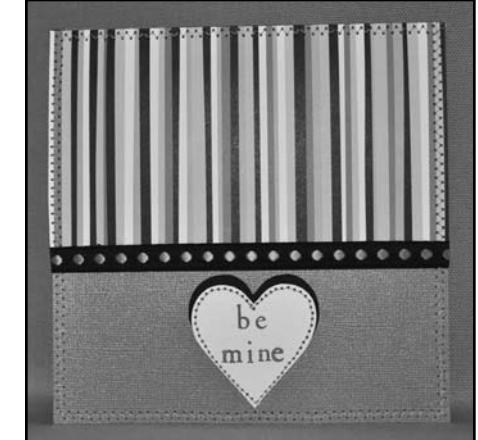
Add decorative brads in each corner.

Tie a pretty ribbon around the top of the card.

**Be Mine – finished size 6" x 6"**

Supplies for 1 card:

- Rose iridescent card stock for base layer - cut 6" x 12" – Fold in half to finish 6" x 6"
  - Decorative striped paper cut 6" w. x 3-1/2" l. – stripes are cut on the vertical
  - White card stock for cut out heart – cut 1 heart shape
  - Chocolate brown for cut out shadow heart – cut 1 heart shape
  - 18" of pink dot and brown decorative ribbon
  - Rubber stamp lettering and pink ink pad
- Fold rose iridescent card stock in half to



finish 6" x 6."

Glue the striped paper onto the front of the upper portion of the rose card stock.

Make a zig-zag stitch around the 4 edges with pink thread.

Glue the hearts on to the lower portion of the front of the card, carefully stitch around the hearts.

Stamp "Be Mine" on the heart.

Attach decorative ribbon to center of front of card.

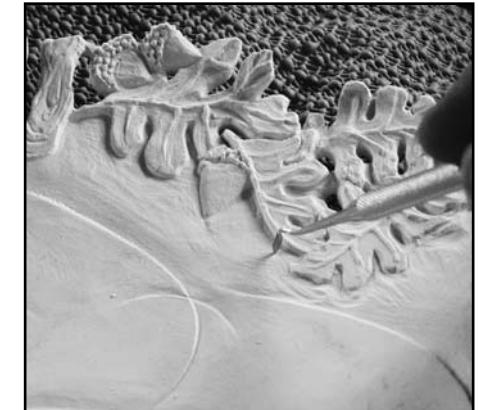
**Resources:**

Scrapbook Territory, Berkeley  
 Michael's Crafts and Arts Supply, Emeryville or Pleasant Hill  
 Joanne Fabrics and Crafts, Concord  
 The Paper Source, Berkeley

## ◆ GALLERY from page 9

always moving toward her creative edge takes passion. Dwinell hopes people will recognize that passion in her pieces. "For those that can see it, it gives me much joy just to have them recognize it," she says.

Call the Orinda Library Gallery, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda (Orinda Village Exit) at 925-254-2814 for more information. This diverse show of three multi-talented women will open your mind, delight your senses, and introduce you to some of our local talent.



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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY / MORAGA ADOBE

## Man Who Didn't Come to Dinner Lauded by Those Who Did Come

By DOROTHY BOWEN  
Staff Writer

To everyone's disappointment, the guest speaker at the Orinda Historical Society's holiday dinner, Vasco Giannini, longtime owner of Black's Market, could not join the OHS members because he was recovering from an accident at home. So instead, the more than 100 guests shared their memories of him and his stories that have contributed so much to the community.

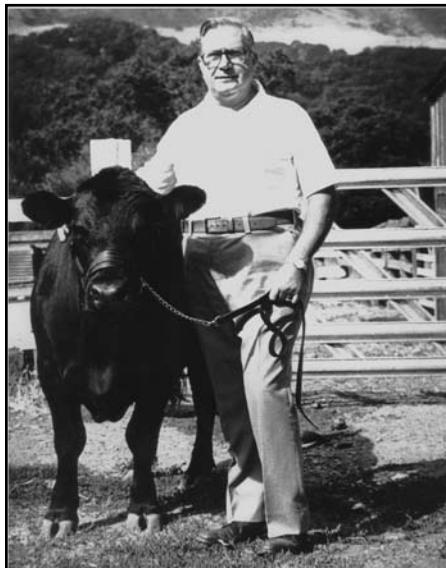
Archivist Kent Long prepared a video of the man and his work, complete with relevant dates and historic photos. OHS President Lucy Hupp Williams plans to take a copy of the video and a get-well card signed by the members to Giannini at his ranch in Salida, near Modesto. Another copy of the video will be available in the OHS archives in the Orinda Library building.

The shared memories stretched back to 1948, when Giannini came to work for Frank Black in the butcher department of his store in Orinda. Giannini had learned his trade from Frank Petrini after Giannini,

having been wounded in World War II, and was discharged in 1945. Landing in San Francisco after his discharge, he became fascinated by the local grocery stores – he thought everything appeared so orderly. Petrini took the young immigrant under his wing.

Black's Market was then located on the Crossroads, on the south side of Orinda, where Peet's Coffee and Tea and the Orinda House stand today. In 1960, Giannini bought Black's Market and in 1967, moved it around the corner, replacing Lucky's where BevMo is today. In 1978, Black's expanded to the Rheem Shopping Center, at Rheem Boulevard and Moraga Road, next to the post office. In 1978, Lucky's closed its Orinda Village store and Black's moved in, and celebrated the opening in 1979 with a Black's Tie Opening to benefit the Orinda Foundation.

After the death of his wife, Alfa, in 1987, Giannini sold the Orinda Village Black's that became Payless, and then Rite Aid.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Vasco Giannini** wasn't able to attend the dinner in his honor. A video of the event will be sent to the longtime owner of Black's Market.

The closing of Black's was a shock to the community, causing the *Orinda Sun* to editorialize that it was the city's job to rescue Black's, just to keep it in the community – a subject relevant to today's political climate. Not everyone in Orinda shopped at Black's

[SEE BLACKS page 16]

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## Friends of the Moraga Adobe

By BOBBIE LANDERS  
Contributing Writer

Joaquin Moraga built his adobe home in 1874 overlooking his ranch and what was then the Moraga valley and was to become the City of Orinda. He constructed it well as it still stands today, albeit with many additions and changes to accommodate today's lifestyle. It has been a residence most of these years until just a few years ago.

Now an opportunity has presented itself for the adobe to be in the public domain. It is one of the oldest residence buildings still in use in the entire Bay Area and should be accessible to the public. To plan for

and raise revenue to preserve this Orinda treasure, The Friends of the Moraga Adobe invite you to their charter meeting on Friday, February 6, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. Call 254-8260 for details.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
The Moraga Adobe at 24 Adobe Lane was built in 1841.

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## Call to Trust!



Andrea Colombu

**T**rust is a very precious "commodity" these days. Its scarcity and its skeptically outshined significance make it difficult to believe in its necessity and importance at such a crucial time for many of us. And yet, trust is exactly what we need most right now.

Much has happened over the last few months to create an environment of diffidence and uncertainty in all of us and all around us. This palpable climate of hesitancy and apprehension provokes natural, strong, emotional responses, most of which challenge our sense of trust. Under these volatile and uncertain circumstances, one certainly has the right to feel wary and doubtful, to express skepticism and mistrust, to act guardedly and fearfully, and to experience anxiety and fear. These powerful and impactful emotions are justifiably human and even necessary under difficult circumstances. As an important aspect of our deeply rooted sense of self-preservation, these emotional expressions play an essential role in helping us overcome the toughest of times and the harshest of circumstances. However, there is much to be mindful of when engaged in highly intense emotional states of being.

When we experience prolonged states of fear, uncertainty, anxiety and mistrust, our system is forced to function in a constant state of heightened alert. Under these circumstances, our entire organism does its best to cope, but it does so under a lot of stress due to the high demands placed on it. Our nervous system responds by secreting potentially dangerous high quantities of stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. Rest and relaxation are compromised, causing weakening of the immune, metabolic, cardiovascular and digestive systems with many harmful repercussions to our health.

Furthermore, especially during these challenging times, we must be mindful of the fact that there is more to who we are than our fearful emotions and that trust, even when seemingly nonexistent and inaccessible, is ever present and available to us at any moment. Trust, being so deeply

rooted in our consciousness as one of the most essential and characteristic aspects of our humanness, is truly the primary source of strength for our resilient spirit. Trust is and will always be innately within us. We know how to trust, because we have known trust since the moment of our birth and even the harshest of circumstances cannot defeat its presence within. We trust even when we do not realize it, and hence we live. Trust and life are, therefore, is a sense synonym. And, it is not surprising how in spite of all the difficulties we are facing something greater than mistrust and fear continues to propel us forward. Cautiously and hesitatingly, we get up every day, and we continue to move ahead; we continue to live our lives willing to try and trust again. Let's be mindful of that!

At the dawn of a New Year, especially this year, let's remind ourselves that there is more to our humanness than fear, anxiety, depression and mistrust. As we continue to endure and cope with instability and uncertainty, let us remain unwilling to be defeated or defined by emotions of fear. Let us be mindful of the fact that emotions are not who we are rather what we experience. Emotions come and go. Being mindful of this impermanence will help us not fully identify with them but rather see it as an experience we are having for the moment that cannot define our larger nature. Let us remember that in the absence of trust, fear can take over. When we operate from fear, we suffer physically, psychologically and spiritually. Let's be mindful of the choices we make. Let's choose possibility over hopelessness, abundance over scarcity, creativity over stagnation, and trust over fear. Let us reclaim trust in ourselves, in each other, in our resilient spirit, in our capacity for change, growth and transformation, in the Divine, and all its beautiful forms and expressions. Let us trust more, let us trust again!

Until next time, be well, happy New Year and many blessings!

Contact Andrea Colombu at [informa4@comcast.net](mailto:informa4@comcast.net)

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## ◆ BLACK'S from page 15

all the time, the speakers at OHS agreed, but everyone knew that it was the place to go if you wanted something special.

Giannini hired local boys as baggers. It was a plum job, paying wages of \$6 an hour, and triple time for holidays. Peter deLaveaga remembers Vasco filling up at his father, Ned's, Chevron gas station and putting his arm around him, saying, "When you turn 16, you come work for me." It was better than pumping gas and changing oil. "It was the best job in town," he said. The downside of being a bagger was that they were expected to carry grocery bags out to the car for all customers and never to expect or accept tips.

Ned deLaveaga also brought in pheasants and other game, including a marauding deer, to Black's butchers to be cleaned and cut up.

Giannini had a flair for marketing. The shopping bags were decorated with a drawing of Vasco as a Venetian gondolier. He subsidized the Future Farmers of America at Miramonte High School. The group of students bought calves and raised them to sell at the county fair. Then Giannini bought them and sold them back to Orinda parents in his store.

David Englehart recalled the trip to Italy that Rotary took with the Gianninis. When they visited his home town of Bozzano, near Lucca, a chef from Florence prepared a 19-course meal to honor the native son who had done so well in America and who never forgot to help out those left behind, when he could.

Giannini sent a letter to be read at the holiday. He wrote, in part, "It is with the deepest regret that I cannot be with you tonight. What an honor for a little immigrant from Italy!"

## CALENDAR

## ON THE CALENDAR

## JANUARY

- 3 **Orinda Library Gallery Show**, multi-media presentations through January, Orinda Library Gallery.
- 6 **Orinda Youth Association** Registration, 10 a.m. to noon, for spring baseball, softball, T-Ball and Incrediball. Not to be confused with Orinda Baseball Association. Continues January 8, 5-7 p.m., January 12, 10 a.m. to noon, and January 15, 10 a.m. to noon. Fees vary from \$152 to \$225. Phone 253-4204 or email [jjohnston@cityoforinda.org](mailto:jjohnston@cityoforinda.org).
- Orinda Rotary** Trumpet Performance and luncheon, noon, Orinda Community Center. Mike Vax will speak about big band jazz. 254-2222.
- 9 **First Friday Forum**, Professor Johan Snapper on "The Church and Anti-Semitism: Some Historical Perspectives," Orinda Community Church, 1 p.m. refreshments, 1:30 p.m. lecture, 254-4906.
- 15 **Orinda Books** Author Appearance, 4 p.m. Sally Small will discuss and sign copies of her new novel, *Two Sloughs*. 254-7606.
- 16 **Montelindo Garden Club**, 9:30 a.m. with speaker at 10 a.m., Orinda Community Church. Speaker: Columnist Gary Bogue about wildlife and the environment. Free, guests welcome. [www.montelindogarden.com](http://www.montelindogarden.com) or email [montelindogarden@aol.com](mailto:montelindogarden@aol.com).
- 20 **World Affairs Book Group**, 3 p.m., Orinda Books. Discussion of *The Oil and the Glory: The Pursuit of Empire and Fortune on the Caspian Sea*, by Steve LeVine. 925-935-1565.
- Orinda Rotary** Annual Orinda Crime Report, noon, Orinda Community Center, with Orinda Police Chief Bill French. 254-2222.
- 25 **Orinda Association** Volunteer of the Year and William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental awards dinner, Orinda Country Club, 6 p.m. cocktails followed by dinner and awards, 254-0800.
- 28 **Orinda Rotary** State of the City Address, noon, Orinda Community Center. 254-2222.
- Orinda Books** Author Discussion, 1 p.m. Inez Hollander discusses and signs copies of her new book, *Silenced Voices*. 254-7606.

## AT THE LIBRARY

- 7 **Toddler Lapsit** - Songs, 10 a.m., stories and rhymes for 1- to 3-year-olds and their caregivers. Repeats at 10:30 in the Gallery Room. Please attend no more than one storytime a week. Repeats January 8, 14, 15, 21 and 28.
- Peek-a-Boo Storytime**, 11:30 a.m., for newborns to 1-year-olds. Families with older siblings are welcome to attend Toddler Lapsit. Repeats January 8, 15 and 28.
- 10 **Saturday Morning Live!** 11 a.m., Family story time for 3- to 5-year-olds, in the Picturebook area. Repeats January 17, 24 and 31.
- 25 Lunar New Year Performance, 4 p.m., Library Auditorium. Performers to be announced.

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

## MEETINGS:

## 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.

## City Council

First and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).

## 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.

## Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees

OUSD Conference Room, 8 Altarinda Road, January 12, 4 p.m.

## 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

**Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Masonic Center. Contact Karen Seaborn, 925-689-0995.

**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.

**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.

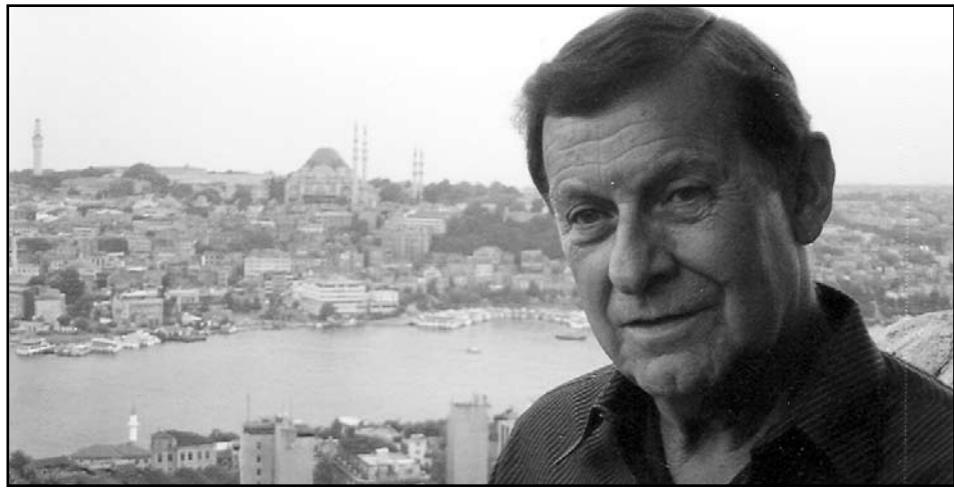
**Orinda/Tábor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**, Fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.

**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](mailto:chrislavin@earthlink.net)

## Forum Takes on History of Anti-Semitism



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Professor Johan Snapper** will discuss the historical perspectives of the church and anti-Semitism in the next Friday Forum.

By BOBBIE DODSON

Staff Writer

"**Yester**day and Today: The Church and Anti-Semitism: Some Historical Perspectives," is the title of the talk Professor Johan Snapper will be addressing at the Friday Forum on January 9 in Fellowship Hall at the Orinda Community Church. Refreshments will be served at 1 p.m. with the lecture at 1:30 p.m.

Snapper says, "As a child of a family that sheltered Dutch Jews during World War II, the topic of anti-Semitism has been close to my heart for more than six decades. My talk will begin with discussing how

churches have historically wrestled with the phrase uttered by the Jews to Pontius Pilate prior to the crucifixion: 'His blood be upon us and our children,' and how the Christian church turned the 'prophecy' into a reality, making it a mandate to become the principal persecutor of Jews from the very beginning.

"I will show how anti-Semitism as we understand the term today was a creation of the church and embraced by church fathers, popes, and Reformers alike (especially Luther). Also, how Hitler actually used the historical record of the Christian church to his 'Final Solution' for all Jews; i.e., the Holocaust."

Pointing out that the church has largely abandoned its collective anti-Semitic attitude, Snapper says it is now confronted with new forms of bigotry and presents Christians and humanitarians with new challenges.

As a specialist in German and Dutch literature, Snapper has lectured on the Holocaust at many universities and conferences in Europe and the United States. He also has offered courses dealing with Nazism and Judaism at the UC Berkeley and UCLA.

Snapper received his doctorate degree from UCLA and has taught there as well as at the University of Antwerp, Belgium and UC Berkeley. He was knighted by Queen Beatrix and by the Belgian ambassador and received a U.S. Congressional citation for providing support to European immigrants in the United States. He is a long-time member of Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church.

The First Friday Forum series is open to anyone interested in provocative topics. Visitors are encouraged to bring questions – and your friends.

## Salsa Dancing Club Style at the Orinda Community Center

Popular dance instructor Tomag Trenda will offer club style salsa dancing for both the beginner and intermediate dancer this January. "Salsa is fun, playful, passionate, and easy to learn," says Trenda. No partner is required for either level. The beginning class runs Mondays, 7 - 8 p.m., January 5 - February 23. The intermediate level class is also on Mondays, January 5 - February 23 from 8 - 9:15 p.m. The intermediate salsa class includes more footwork, multiple turns, and more complex partner patterns. Beginning salsa or a solid understanding of partner dancing is required.

To sign up for either class, call the Orinda Community Center at 254-2445.

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## BUSINESS BUZZ

## ◆ BUZZ from page 20

an individual escrow, and the agent must think on his or her feet to be able to respond appropriately to the unique circumstances surrounding each escrow," says Brown.

In several areas within Contra Costa County, the real estate market is very different now. "People are losing their jobs, and home foreclosures are more common. On the other end of it, these losses are providing opportunities for some people to buy a home who previously were unable to do so," she adds. Brown always encourages people to buy a home, because she believes it continues to be the best investment. "It touches my heart when I think of my clients whom I have been able to assist in buying their first home," she says.

Contrary to some areas in Contra Costa County that have been hard hit, Orinda property values appear to be maintaining. "People in Orinda should be proud to be here. This will continue to be a desirable area to live, with our excellent public schools, semi-rural character, and close proximity to San Francisco." Lenders are very cautious these days according to Brown. "Lenders want to be certain that their loans will be paid back, so they are requiring buyers to come up with a lot of information. That is as it should be."

Customer service is the single most important factor in pretty much any business, especially the real estate business. "I really enjoy my clients. I always try to go that extra mile, and it is true that most of the agents I know try to do that," points out Brown, who is a director of the California Association of Realtors and is a member of the Contra Costa Realtors Association. She advocates for housing and educational issues before legislators in Sacramento as well as Washington, D.C.

Previous to her career in real estate, Brown was in broadcasting and public relations. She began her career as a tour guide at NBC Studios in New York City, while a student at New York University. She moved on to public relations and programming with KCBS in San Francisco.

Brown emphasizes the importance of listening to people and understanding what they want in a home. Excellent listening skills enable her to guide clients to the home they desire. "It is a people business. Always has been and always will be. Technology has tried to intervene, but ultimately it all comes back to people," she claims.

Brown is a longtime member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. For more information, call 925-998-5461 or visit the website at [www.marychattonbrown.com](http://www.marychattonbrown.com).

**Swedehandyman – One Call Does It All**

Five years ago, and after a successful career as a mechanical engineer designing instruments inside medical devices, Bob Bergman went into the handyman business. While working as a mechanical



VALERIE HOTZ  
Handyman Bob Bergman does it all.

engineer for Applied Biosystems, Bergman contributed to the design of the fetal heart monitor, something familiar to many Orinda mothers. Pursuing no less an important role these days, you are likely to find Bergman designing and installing attractive and functional outdoor decking.

Swedehandyman is based out of his Orinda home, and he services the Lamorinda area, although he has completed various jobs from Hayward to Napa. The list of repairs and projects is extensive, including installing exterior plumbing and exterior lights, rebuilding decks, and remodeling kitchens. He installs everything from garbage disposals, water heaters and gas lines for outdoor barbecues and has repaired everything from electric blinds to a broken treadmill.

"I view home projects from an engineering perspective, rather than from a contractor's point of view. When I start a job, I work on it exclusively until it is completed and I take pride in completing projects in a timely manner," says Bergman.

Originally from Two Harbours, a town with a population of 4,000 in northern Minnesota, it is natural for Bergman to be a handyman in a small town like Orinda,

where everyone pretty much knows his neighbor. "The community spirit here is so strong and everyone literally does know everyone else," he adds.

Bergman's wife, Doris, is a recruiter for Consistoga, Rovers and Associates. The couple moved to Orinda in 1980. They have three children, all of whom attended Orinda public schools.

Annika is a student at Diablo Valley College and is transferring to the American Musical and Drama Academy next fall. Kelsey is a senior at Miramonte High School and has her sights set on UC Santa

Cruz, after graduating in June. Ande is currently a sophomore at Miramonte. When this busy family gets together, they enjoy skiing in Tahoe and day-tripping to various Bay Area destinations.

Swedehandyman is available initially in a two hour block of time at \$130 for the first two hours. Thereafter, the rate is \$50 an hour and the materials are extra. For more information, call Bob Bergman at 925-548-6474 or email him at [swedehyman@yahoo.com](mailto:swedehyman@yahoo.com).

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## BUSINESS BUZZ

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### Peppermint Playhouse Celebrates 20th Anniversary

With 32 years of teaching experience to her credit, Chris Phelps knows a thing or two about the 3- to 5-year-old set. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Peppermint Playhouse, a very special pre-school experience that Phelps manages within her Orinda home.

With a small class size of 12 students and her assistant for the past nine years, Kathleen Myers, Phelps delivers a structured program that encourages children to love learning and helps them develop social skills along the way. "We focus on consideration for others and encourage being compassionate and kind. We build a few games around these themes. Our parents tremendously appreciate this philosophy and often students will go home and teach their younger siblings about being a good friend," says Phelps.

After earning her bachelor's degree, elementary credential and special education credential at California State University, San Diego, Phelps taught learning disabled

students at the elementary level. When she and her husband, Regi Phelps, relocated to Orinda in 1988, Phelps worked at St. Mark's Pre-School in Orinda, while simultaneously creating Peppermint Playhouse. Regi is in the labor relations field. The couple's two children, Kevin and Lauren, attended Orinda schools and graduated from Miramonte High School. Today Kevin is a practicing architect in Los Angeles, and Lauren works in the government affairs department of a large corporation in Washington, D.C.

"Over the years, the most remarkable thing about Peppermint for me has been knowing so many wonderful families and seeing how dedicated parents are to their children's well-being, as well as helping prepare them for entering kindergarten. Of course, watching the children grow up into responsible adults has been personally rewarding," adds Phelps.

The two separate programs for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds both run from 9:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. two days a week. Three-year-olds attend on Wednesdays and Fridays and the program for 4-year-olds is on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Both programs include a freshly prepared lunch (the tuna melts are legendary) and snack. Phelps' gentle manner, fertile imagination and wonderful creativity will make parents them-



SALLY HOGARTY

**Chris Phelps** (2nd from left) and her assistant **Kathleen Myers** (3rd from right) are shown with the children at Peppermint Playhouse.

selves want to stay. There is a weekly science theme and, in addition, Mad Science visits, as well as a "My Healthy Body" program. Once a month the small fry have a special cooking project in Phelps' home kitchen. Then there is also parachute play once a month and the 4-year-olds enjoy great field trips to the Lawrence Hall of Science, Children's Park Little Farm and buddy up to Orinda public schools' fifth grade classes at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area for Pioneer Days. In the springtime, they plant vegetables, cultivate the garden and subsequently harvest the vegetables.

"We cover a myriad of diverse subjects that include hibernating animals, numbers, the alphabet, the four seasons, Chinese New Year, and Cinco de Mayo. In the springtime, we gather tadpoles from the creek near Saint Mary's College, watch them turn into frogs, and then release them back into the creek," explains Phelps.

When not preparing a curriculum or teaching, Phelps enjoys gardening, walking regularly with friends, and is currently very busy with the family's new golden retriever, Simba.

In all the years she has managed her fine pre-school, Phelps has never placed advertisements for Peppermint Playhouse. "We have operated completely by word of mouth."

One thing is for sure, over the past 20 years, 240 5-year-olds have been prepared for kindergarten by Chris Phelps and her able assistants. It is no surprise

she has a waiting list for 2011. For more information about Peppermint Playhouse, call 376-7342.

### **Mary Chatton Brown – For Your Real Estate Needs**

If you are looking for someone who has witnessed all the trends in Lamorinda real estate and knows the territory, then you need to speak with Mary Chatton Brown. She was licensed to sell real estate in 1968 and started with the Orinda office of John Grubb the same year. Fifteen years later, in



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mary Chatton Brown of Mary Chatton Brown and Associates.

1983, Brown opened her own office, which today is located at 12A Orinda Way.

"There have been many changes over the years and trends rise and fall, but the important thing to remember is every escrow is different. There is no pattern involved with

[SEE BUZZ page 19]



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