

THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis
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December 2011

The Orinda News Celebrates 25 Years of Continuous Publication



(L-R) Former editor **Ann O'Connell-Nye**, current editor **Sally Hogarty**, and former editors **Lynda Leonard** and **Hillary Hoppock** at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

By SALLY HOGARTY,
HILLARY HOPPOCK,
LYNDA LEONARD,
ANN O'CONNELL-NYE
Editor and Former Editors

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Orinda's community newspaper, *The Orinda News*, published by the Orinda Association. Although there had been a spattering of local newspapers from 1929 to 1964, *The Orinda News*, begun in March of 1986 by local resident Ann O'Connell-Nye, has continued to grow and expand, providing continuous local coverage for Orinda residents at no charge. Thanks to our dedicated staff, readers and advertisers, we have remained a vital local newspaper even in these tough economic times when many printed news media have disappeared or become online only publications.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the "little paper that could," past editors and the current editor have offered their experiences here for readers.

Ann O'Connell-Nye (Editor 1985 – 1988, Staff 1988 - 2005)

It's the dream of any journalist to establish a community newspaper. The impetus for the idea came with the California Supreme Court's precedent-setting case that stayed the demolition of the Orinda Theatre and scaled down the Theatre Square project to conform to local planning laws. Orindans wanted local control and voted to incorporate.

After freelancing eight years with the *Contra Costa Times* and *The Sun*, it seemed like the right time to form a local newspaper. I heard there had been a series of local newspapers under various names in Orinda, sporadically published from 1929 to 1964. Todd Skinner, former director of Orinda Parks and Recreation, showed me one of the early newspapers with an artistic masthead of the hills by local artist Lonie Bee. It was named *Orinda News*.

I ran with the idea. Besides the name, layout and design were all new. Technology was so minimal in 1985 – no email, no fax, no scanning, no computer layout programs, little color, less than clear photographs, and only one company in the area that had the capacity to print a newspaper. Often, late night trips were made to the print shop in San Ramon to check the quality and, sometimes, stop the presses.

With Jim Roethe at the helm, the Orinda Association (OA), then the homeowners' watchdog of county government and the original publisher of an earlier *Orinda News*, agreed to help financially.

Next, advertising was needed. With some willing friends to help out, we approached only Orinda businesses. With a tiny staff and the help of a few OA board members, *The New Orinda News* was born. It began with a quarterly schedule of eight pages, which quickly grew to 12 and 16 pages.

Some readers thought there might not be enough "news" in our area but quickly realized there was plenty. I discovered amazing residents with fascinating backgrounds. I found we were a more diverse group than

[SEE NEWS page 17]

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The Holiday Season Fast Approaches



SALLY HOGARTY

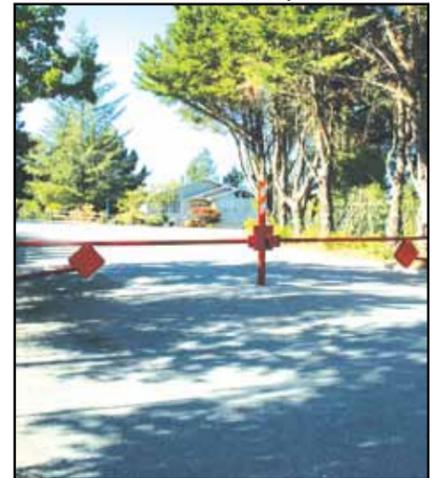
Kick off this holiday season with the Hospice annual tree lighting on December 4 at 4:30 p.m. Go to pg. 11 for all the details. For suggestions on gift giving this year, see pgs. 9-10. All of us at *The Orinda News* hope you have a happy and safe holiday.

Neighbors Argue Over Stein Way Gate

By DAVID DIERKS
Staff Writer

Many neighbors are concerned about the fate of the Stein Way gate. The gate obstructs traffic flow from Stein Way onto Knickerbocker Lane. Some Knickerbocker Lane residents have requested that the gate be permanently reopened to traffic. Their primary concerns are for the safety of neighborhood residents in the event of an emergency and emergency response times. Opponents to opening the gate permanently are worried about traffic control. The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) reviewed the issue and made a decision about their recommendation to the City Council at their November 28 special meeting. The decision was not available at press time.

The gate between Stein Way and Knickerbocker Lane was installed as the first homes in the Castlegate development were being built. According to Charles Swanson, the City of Orinda Director of Public Works and Engineering Services, "The gate was originally installed in 1996 or 1997 with the construction of Stein Way. We do not have the exact date of installation. The



NICOLE GAGLIARDI

This gate at the top of Stein Way keeps traffic from Knickerbocker Lane.

authorization to install the gate came from the City Council based on public comments received at two City Council meetings during the process of forming the Oak Springs Special Improvement District that was set up to fund and construct the roads and drainage on the Stein Way side of the gate."

The gate is maintained by the City of Orinda. "The City Council decided that this

[SEE GATE page 16]

Happy Holidays

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Our Own "Immortals" in Orinda



SALLY HOGARTY

Beau Behan (2nd from left) and the California Independent Film Festival feted the two screenwriters for the newly released film *Immortals* at the Orinda Theatre on November 13. Charley (L) and Vlas Parlapanides (2nd from right) walked the red carpet with local celebrity writer Frosene Phillips (R) into a crowd of expectant and enthusiastic filmgoers, all of whom were anxious to speak to them and feast on a sumptuous array of local Greek food fit for the Gods.

Four Women Who Live for Art

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

The Orinda Library Gallery is proud to present the work of four local artists: ceramics by Lesley Jensen, Alice Lasky and Cora Bolesch, and watercolors by Charlotte Huntley. The show is up the entire month and you are invited to attend the artists reception on Sunday, December 4 from 3 to 4:30 p.m., where light refreshments will be served. Take a moment during your busy month to visit the serenely quiet gallery with works that will both inspire and refresh you!

Lesley Jensen of Benicia is a member of Clay Arts Guild (CAG) in Walnut Creek and is showing 40 works including porcelains decorated with floral motifs. Jensen favors different kinds of firings including



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cora Bolesch's teapot will be on display.

that's the beauty of it," Jensen says.

Alice Lasky of Walnut Creek (also a member of Clay Arts Guild) is showing 20 works including a bamboo porcelain series painted with green under glaze using Japanese Sumi-E brush strokes as well as an Oak Tree series of stoneware with acorns, oak leaves and bark surfaces. She loves the feel of working with clay and its endless possibilities. Lasky hopes people will view her work as both functional and beautiful. She says, "Art brings beauty to our community and artists feel part of the community when they are supported."

Charlotte Huntley of Lafayette has been drawing and painting since childhood. She and her husband Neal are active in the American Watercolor Society, an organization over 140 years old. Huntley was in 33 shows last year and 27 this year, receiving over nine awards from all over the U.S. including first place in the watercolor category for the Society of Western Artists in California. She is showing a retrospective of her work, 20 paintings including themes of animals, still lifes, animal skulls, and portraits. Many of her paintings are derived from her travels around the world portraying unusual subjects such as a Cheshire camel from Egypt, a long-necked heron from Laos and children in traditional dress from Thailand.

Cora Bolesch of Walnut Creek, another member of Clay Arts Guild, will be showing a variety of works using different firing methods.

Visit the gallery during normal library hours - Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Call 254-2814 for more information.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Alice Lasky's Stoneware Casserole is part of the December exhibit.

pit firing, raku, high fire, horsehair, popoff and cow dung firing. Working on the wheel and learning to throw well allows her to experiment at CAG. "You never know what's going to happen; you can't control it, and

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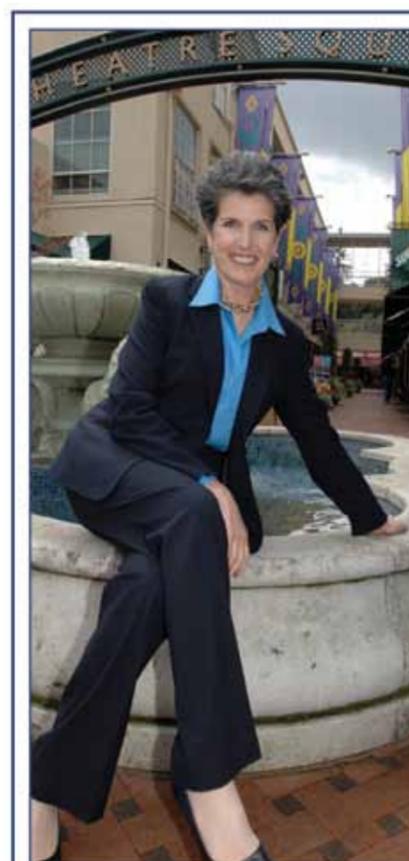
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ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President
Fourth of July in December?



Mark Roberts

The days are shorter, the nights are colder, and I'm writing about the 4th of July? Sure! We sometimes read about Christmas in July promotions so I'm just turning the tables – and for a very important reason.

Orinda's annual 4th of July parade and celebration is a 28-year-old tradition and a favorite event of thousands of Orinda families, friends, neighbors and guests from other communities. It is one of the Orinda Association's signature programs, to be sure, and one that the OA board and the planning committee enjoys preparing for every year. My thanks go to Bobbie Landers, John Fazel and the other founders of the event in 1984, and to the hundreds of volunteers who have been part of the planning and presentation each year since then.

Until last year, the City of Orinda was the OA's primary partner in presenting the event. I'm sure that it comes as news to no one that the current economic and budgetary climate has forced the city to cut back almost completely on discretionary expenditures. The mayor and the city manager have been very forthcoming about this situation and have worked closely with the OA and the planning committee to let us know about the cost of the services – police (primarily for traffic control), parks and recreation and public works – the city provides to make the parade and celebration possible: between \$7,000 and \$8,000 per year.

Last year, in anticipation of incurring those costs, the OA sought a new partner for the Fourth of July. I am very grateful to the Orinda Community Foundation (OCF), which was founded less than two years ago

to enhance the quality of life in our city, for its generous grant to underwrite a large portion of these costs and for the personal participation of nearly all of its trustees. I am very pleased to report that the OCF has already renewed its commitment to support the 2012 event as well. Thank you!

I'm also grateful to the city for its ability to absorb the cost of city services last year. City Manager Janet Keeter didn't know that would be possible and, therefore, couldn't tell the planning committee, until nearly the end of June. That's the challenge with a fiscal year that ends on June 30 and an event that occurs four days later! Early discussions with the city about next year's event have made it clear that we can't count on a similar outcome once again.

That's why I'm describing the situation to you – OA members (thank you as always!), Orinda residents, business owners and members of volunteer organizations – seven months in advance of the event and asking for your help.

Orindans come out by the thousands on the Fourth to march in the parade, cheer along the parade route and enjoy activities in the Community Center Park. That's a tradition I never want to see change. What I'm asking you to do is to take an active role in planning, supporting and sponsoring the parade and celebration in advance so that we can make sure – together – that this terrific tradition continues.

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce has already responded to my call and has chosen one of its board members to become part of the planning committee. The OA and the Chamber are working together to create opportunities for the city's business

community to increase its participation and benefit from publicity and patronage. (Special thanks to Orinda Motors for recognizing this opportunity and being the lead business sponsor for the past seven years.)

Please share your ideas for increasing participation and sponsorship with the OA and me. If you represent a business or volunteer organization that wants to get involved, please let us know ASAP. Orinda is full of resourceful and generous people so I know that the talent pool is deep. If you've been waiting to be asked to get involved in planning and supporting our community's summer celebration, I'M ASKING! The time is now! Thanks in advance for helping maintain one of Orinda's favorite traditions. Contact Mark at oa@orindaassociation.org.

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SALLY HOGARTY

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- 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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- ❖ Seniors Around Town
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- ❖ Public Forums
- ❖ The Volunteer Center
- ❖ Publisher of *The Orinda News*
- ❖ Volunteer of the Year and William Penn Mott Jr. Environmental Awards

Without the support of our members, none of this would be possible. Please join the Orinda Association and become part of something special! You can join online at www.orindaassociation.org. Your tax deductible donation is appreciated.



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Letters to the Editor

A Surprise Halloween Treat

The night of Halloween was a big surprise. We do not get many callers for treats because we are on a steep hill. On answering the door bell summons, I was surprised to find a very polite young boy who handed me a lovely red rose. I asked him if he wanted any chocolates and he answered "No, this rose is for you." He must have surprised a few of my neighbors also.

I do not know this young boy, but I would certainly like to give him a shout-out. It was the best costume of the night and how unselfish, a thing that seems to be lacking these days. I felt as though I was on the "Bachelor."

—Sheila Clarke

Let Orindans make a Democratic Decision About the Future of Orinda.

As is known by many, but not a majority of Orindans, there is a move in place to redevelop our downtown with high rise buildings. Proponents of this, including some elected Orindans, members of our Orinda city staff, and developers are trying to tell us that expanding our downtown will generate increased sales and increased sales tax revenue. The first step is to raise our downtown building height limits.

The fundamental question is do we want to keep the downtown as is, with its small town "semi rural" character? Or do we want to expand? Do we want to create a five-story downtown with housing above retail business?

Meetings by the City of Orinda promoting downtown expansion resulted in a public outcry with overwhelming support that we keep our city as it is. In response to that our City Manager, at the direction of our elected officials, contracted with MIG, Inc. in Berkeley to run meetings to determine: "What do Orinda residents really want?" Two MIG meetings conducted by MIG at the Community church were highly controlled. There was no open forum for free expression by residents.

Following that our city held four similar workshops with the alleged intent of finding what Orindans want downtown. These meetings were held at our four elementary schools, hoping parents of elementary aged children would come to present their ideas about our downtown. The city seemed to believe that parents of elementary children would want downtown expansion. These meetings were conducted by our city staff. The meeting content was controlled. Our city staff allowed residents only to answer specific questions about the future of Orinda. "What are our assets and challenges?" There was no open forum. Residents could not stand up and say "I want this" for the future of Orinda. Building height and downtown regimental expansion were not

on the meeting agendas.

Our city staff did not allow residents to address building height or expansion. All four meetings were attended by a total of about 150 residents. A very small fraction, about 20, were attended by parents of elementary school children.

We strongly feel that the public consensus at these meetings, by a show of hands, and by the few who were able to speak out was "No, leave Orinda as it is. Let us have the town we love and treasure."

This letter is a plea for public meetings that will allow open opinion about downtown expansion. This must be followed by a referendum that says yes or no to downtown height and expansion.

If a majority of Orindans were formally asked this question, "do we want to create a four-story downtown or don't we," we think the answer at the voter poll would be no. For more information about this open SaveOrinda.com and sign up to be informed.

— Kent and Barbara Hagen

The Advantages of Making Something Happen in Downtown Orinda

In Mark Roberts' October column, he reminds us that change happens very slowly in Orinda's business district. As he points out, a relatively few commercial property owners own the key downtown properties. He surmises that these owners don't want to jeopardize existing cash flows by even considering the revitalization contemplated by the Planning Process Review Task Force. In the short run, he may be right. The owners of real estate are going to do what they believe to be in their best interests. Given the indifference the City of Orinda has shown in the past to downtown improvement, why take a risk?

I would submit, however, that in the long run every downtown stakeholders could benefit significantly by an improved climate for owning commercial real estate in Orinda. The owner of a 50-year-old property would eventually realize that he or she — or the buyer of his or her real estate — could realize a much higher value by improving that property to contemporary building and design standards. The tenants who rent the improved space would pay a higher rent but would be more than able to afford it by doing greater sales volume in a more efficient and attractive space - where customers want to be. The resulting benefit to the city would be higher assessed values and higher tax receipts. Orinda residents would benefit from a better environment in which to work, shop and dine, as well as from an improving downtown that would enhance residential property values.

The question is how to get from a deteriorating downtown to one that is improving?



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It is a three-part answer, it seems to me. First, there needs to be a greater receptiveness to zoning flexibility on the part of our elected officials to enable significant improvement to happen. Second, there needs to be willingness on the part of our Planning

Commission to engage independent, professional urban planners to put downtown Orinda on the path to a more rational and attractive business environment. Third, there needs to be willingness on the part [SEE LETTER page 6]

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Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis and should be no longer than 400 words. They must include the writer's first and last name, signature and telephone number.

Send letters to: Editor, *The Orinda News*, P.O. Box 97, Orinda, CA 94563, fax them to 254-8312, or email to news@orindaassociation.org. Letters to the Editor for the January issue are due December 5, 2011.

For display advertising rates, call Jill Gelster at 925-528-9225 or email to jill@aspenconsult.net. The deadline for the February issue is December 20, 2011.

POLICE / BART / RECYCLING



POLICE BLOTTER

October 2011

False Residential Alarms: Officers responded to 80 false alarm calls throughout the city.

Burglary – Auto: 4 incidents were reported on Martha Rd., Wilder Rd., Oak Rd. and Ivy Dr.

Burglary – Commercial: 1 incident was reported on Camino Sobrante.

Burglary – Residential: 3 incidents were reported on Woodland Rd., Orchard Rd. and Davis Rd.

Grand Theft – From Vehicle: 3 incidents were reported on Calvin Ct., Spring Rd. and Wanda Ln.

Petty Theft – From Vehicle: 4 incidents were reported on Meadow Park Ct., Estates Ct., Estates Dr. and Van Ripper Ln.

Stolen Vehicle: 1 vehicle was stolen from La Cresta Rd.

Vandalism – Felony: 1 incident was reported on Sleepy Hollow Ln.

Arrests

Battery - Domestic: 1 arrest was made on Moraga Way.

MISD < .08: 1 arrest was made on Orinda Way @ Santa Maria Way.

Drunk in Public: 1 arrest was made on Lombardy Ln.

Juvenile Alcohol-Related Arrests: 1 arrest was made.

Recovered Stolen Vehicle: 1 incident was reported on Brookwood Rd. and Camino Pablo.

Warrant Arrest: 1 arrest was made on Valley Ct.

Orinda BART Station

Burglary - Auto: 1 incident was reported.

– Compiled by Jeanette Irving, Orinda Police Department

Pilot Recycling Program Earns Residents Goods and Services

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Putting those newspapers, various packaging, cans and bottles into your brown Waste Authority recycling container can now help you save money thanks to a new pilot program.

Initiated by the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority and administered by Recyclebank, the new program rewards residents in Orinda and Moraga for putting more in their recycling container and less in their garbage bin. “Each resident’s recycling container is weighed and that weight is converted to reward points,” says Gary Carr, senior program manager at the Waste Authority. “People can use their points to receive discounted services and products or they can donate their points to schools involved in the Green Schools program.” Discounted green products include organic food items, eyewear, sporting goods, clothing, and such services as tutoring, to mention just a few.

The Waste Authority has partnered with RecycleBank for the pilot program. Built on the idea that environmental solutions provide economic opportunities, RecycleBank strives to increase recycling rates, curb energy and water consumption, encourage smarter transportation, and help people



NICOLE GAGLIARDI
Orinda Association president Mark Roberts participates in the Recycling awards pilot program running in Lamorinda through June.

realize the financial benefits of making greener choices.

“We’re hoping that the pilot program will create new incentives for people to increase their recycling,” says Carr. “One incentive many people don’t realize is that by putting less and less in their garbage can, they can go to a smaller size can thus reducing their monthly garbage bill.”

The pilot program runs through June. Residents can sign up for the program by going to www.recyclebank.com. The site also has information on other ways to earn points and additional ways to go green.

BART Senior and Disabled Tickets Changing With the New Year

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Those green senior and red youth/disabled BART tickets will be a thing of the past when January 1, 2012 rolls around. Replacing the highly valued discount cards will be Clipper Cards.

Many have probably heard about the Clipper all-in-one transit card or seen others using them at BART and MUNI. The Clipper Card can hold multiple passes, ride books or tickets as well as up to \$300 in cash value at one time. The card can be used on BART, MUNI, AC Transit, CalTrain, SamTrans, the Golden Gate bus and ferry rides, and VTA buses and light rail vehicles.

Obtaining a discounted Clipper Card will not be as easy as it was to get discounted BART cards, which could be purchased at Safeway. You must apply in person, although parents can bring identifying documents for a young child. To verify your identify and proof of eligibility, you must bring one of the following to a Clipper Card

Center or one of the many events planned during December to issue the new cards: birth certificate, driver’s license, identification card, alien registration/permanent resident card, Consular Identification card, passport, or SF City ID card.

The minimum age for youths is five years old with the maximum age varying by transit agency. The minimum age for a senior card is 65. Once you obtain a card, you can add value to it at any of BART’s 44 stations.

To simplify apply for the new card, the Orinda Community Center will be taking registrations and issuing cards on December 6 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Be sure and bring one of the forms of identification listed above.

For a list of other places where Clipper Cards can be obtained, go to www.clippercard.com or call BART Customer Service at 510-464-7134. The cards are also available at the Embarcadero and Lake Merritt BART stations.

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FILMS



THE REEL LESS TRAVELED

OF TIME WARPS, LOVE, DECEPTION AND ST. LOUIS

Tom Westlake



This column endeavors to steer readers towards cinematic pleasures that one might ordinarily miss and, at no time is that more needed than now. Even those who look upon going to a movie as a “sometimes” thing know that the month of December is when every single studio brings out its big guns. Full-color ads entice us to the latest big budget blockbuster, directed and acted by the *crème de la crème*. The bombast of the previews alone leaves many feeling drained and worn out...never mind the actual movie!

Even Orinda’s most stalwart cinephiles Jo Alice Canterbury and Efi Lubliner, know better than to compete with this onslaught, subsequently, there will be no December offering of their wildly successful International Film Showcase.

But what about the hidden gems lying just beneath the surface of the mainstream? The art of the moving image is just over 100 years of age. During that time, many wonderful films have entertained and enlightened moviegoers. These movies might not have been released last week, but that doesn’t make them any less worthy.

Offering a host of December movie experiences is another mover and shaker of the Orinda and Moraga film scene, Beau Behan, California Independent Film Festival’s (CAIFF) program and promotions director. Ever since taking over the Rheem Theatre in 2010, CAIFF has peppered the mainstream features with the Classic Film Series, The Friday Night of Frights, and The California Independent Film Festival. With the group also now operating the Orinda Theatre, a similar mix is making its appearance in Orinda. In fact, Behan offered a stellar event with the showing of *Immortals* on November 13 with a VIP reception and a Q&A with rising screenwriters Vlas and Charley Parlapianides.

This December, both theaters will offer non-blockbuster gems. Every Saturday at 10 a.m. from December 3 through December 17, the Orinda Theatre will screen a heartwarming and endearing family movie.

Bring a toy or a can of food and you will get in free. “It’s our way of helping those in need and showing wonderful family-oriented holiday movies at the same time,” says Behan. Complete listings of films can be found at www.lamorindatheatres.com.

Starting on December 16, Friday Night Frights features the ever-popular *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Besides being presented as an excuse to draw out Halloween just that much longer, it is also good for catharsis in general. Who can resist a film that encourages audience participation?

On December 17, the Rheem presents its first holiday offering, *Christmas in Connecticut*. This little seen film has an all-star cast including Barbara Stanwyck and Sydney Greenstreet. An airy comedy about deception and romance, it features nary an elf or reindeer and is designed to bring a gentle smile instead of a poignant tear.

Yet if no Christmas is complete without a tug on one’s heartstrings, never fear, the Rheem has that covered, for on December 21 that other Judy Garland film *Meet Me in St. Louis* will be screening. Say what you will about the ever-increasing sophistication of one’s home entertainment systems, but this film really needs to be seen on the big screen!

In many ways, *St. Louis* marks a time when the Hollywood musical was settling down and, at least from a technical standpoint, putting all the lessons it had learned to good use. There is still some experimentation, namely in sectioning off the film into four distinct seasonal parts, but that only serves to make it all the stronger. In any event, this is the one you should go out of your way to see...and for those that have never seen it, you are in for a treat. For further information, including times and how to buy tickets for both the Orinda and Rheem theaters, go to www.lamorindatheatres.com or call 254-9060 (Orinda) and 925-388-0751 (Rheem).

So all that remains is to wish one and all the happiest of holidays...and stay in the dark. That’s where all the magic is.

◆ LETTERS from page 4

of commercial owners to take the risk of improving their properties with the knowledge that the community is committed to a downtown plan that will enhance the value of the entire business district.

A deteriorating downtown in an otherwise healthy community is unnecessary. An improving downtown would be a win-win situation for all Orindans.

– Tom Trowbridge

Orinda’s Downtown Multi Story Low-income Housing Project

Numerous fundamental questions remain regarding the proposed multi story low-income housing project tentatively planned for Orinda’s downtown at the former library site across from the firehouse and close to Safeway. Despite record turnouts last year opposing multi story, approx. 50’ height, development (in this case restricted to very low income subsidized rentals, and generally unavailable to Orinda residents), the City Council seems determined to proceed with this multi story structure independently as if it were external to, and did not need to be integrated with, the overall downtown plan.

Fundamental questions remain unanswered. For example: Why are we doing this project now, in these uncertain, financially challenged times? (The possible elimination of \$300K of state road funding is not a plausible reason, and the state law “mandating housing requirements” is subject to interpretation and leaves various open ends.) What are the risks — financial and otherwise? What happens if funds are terminated half way through construction? Do Orinda residents benefit? If so, how? Is the tax base increased? If so, by how much? Who is going to pay for the initial construction and then to subsidize the rental payments? Who gets to live in the subsidized housing? What are the restrictions? Are they [legally and practically] enforceable? Who is the enforcer?

As an alternative, why not use the land to extend the downtown’s popular park so all Orinda families can benefit? Wasn’t the site zoned in the General Plan so that its use mandated benefits to all Orindans?

The city’s home website says, “Help Shape the Future of Downtown Orinda” and requests residents to complete a detailed survey on what Orindans want for their downtown. Interestingly, not a word is mentioned about the very large, low-income housing “senior citizen” project. How come?

This project and the proposed structure have critical and significant implications for shaping the future of Orinda and its downtown. It is a major component to the

city’s downtown development, and it will have a lasting impact. The project has a long list of uncertainties and risks and much has changed since its inception. How did such a noble concept evolve into this out-of-scale development for this downtown, hillside site?

In fairness to Orinda’s residents, it should not proceed without a transparent fundamental review, current risk assessment, and most important a voting for or against by the residents of Orinda.

– Chris Kniel

Council Rejects Reallocation of MOFD Funds

As reported on last month, the presentation by the Road’s Subcommittee to the Orinda City Council on October 18 offered funding options for the city to consider as it works on a solution or solutions to our deteriorating infrastructure problems. The council, led by Victoria Smith and Steve Glazer, rejected out-of-hand any reallocation of MOFD funds originally intended for Orinda’s infrastructure (specifically water delivery systems,) mostly because MOFD would have to agree to the reallocation, and the City Council has refused to investigate any apparent inequities in funding despite requests from hundreds of Orinda citizens for them to do so. Absent a stronger sense of stewardship on the part of the council, I have a hard time believing they will be able to pass the series of ballot measures requiring a 2/3 vote that they have been advised to consider.

– Diana Stephens

Funding Orinda’s Roads

Having actively followed the “Orinda Road” situation since the Infrastructure Committee issued its report in 2006, I would like to make the following observations regarding the City’s current deliberations on our roads and the money needed to repair and maintain them:

1) While there is much talk about the \$70 million needed to “resurrect them,” little is said of the \$3 million needed annually to maintain them. To bring Orinda’s 90 miles of roads up to standards when we only have one-third of the funds annually to adequately maintain them is equivalent to the bankers who talked and qualified home buyers into mortgages with low interest “teaser rates” when no one had any idea how those loans would be paid for when the rates went up.

2) At the City Council’s October 18 Road Workshop, one of the funding options determined “not viable” was investigating whether or not Orinda taxpayers are overfunding MOFD by \$1 million; in other words, subsidizing Moraga taxpayers by that amount. In the council’s words: “Nobody is saying that should be on the table so that is now off the table.” I think someone needs to more clearly define “nobody.” In a poll last year, 31 percent of the respondents (representing 5,500 residents) said no new taxes should be suggested before the MOFD funding issue was settled. After the Tri-Agency meetings, which were supposed to investigate this issue, came up with no report and no conclusion, Orinda’s representatives told the council that it should form a task force to investigate the allegations. 220 residents signed a petition also asking for a task force. The council refused to even vote on either request. And this reflects nobody? One million dollars per year would go a long way toward meeting our road maintenance shortfalls even if it cannot address the core \$70 million of deteriorating roads. Hardly something that should be swept under the rug just because it is inconvenient.

– Steve Cohn



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HELPING OTHERS / CITY NOTICE

Orinda's Angels Work to Support Troops Injured Overseas



CHRIS LAVIN

Diana Yorgan (L) and Juanita Gilbertson of St. Stephen's Community Church are among the quilters making quilts for veterans in war zones.

By CHRIS LAVIN
Contributing Writer

Last month, and again this month, and next month again, soldiers in hospital beds in Germany will unfold carefully made fleece blankets, and toss them over their hospital gowns and sheets for warmth. The blanket may have a puppy design on it, it may be a colorful plaid, or it may be plain. The warmth is for a wounded man or woman trying to heal, for he or she has been sent to these foreign beds from the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan.

But the card – the photo – is for their souls. It is a color postcard that will fall out from the folds of the blanket. The wounded will pick it up, and see seven “Angels from Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church” in Orinda, lined up and smiling, holding their blankets. Their printed message says: “As you wrap yourself in this blanket, may you feel the love and blessing of God and the people back home who made it. May that

love warm you and encourage you to focus on your recovery.”

The blanket project at the Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church on Moraga Way is but one of the projects of the angels, who get together whenever they can to clip, darn, tie, pin and fold. They have a kind of assembly line going, with one group pinning, another clipping, another tying, another folding them up into large cardboard boxes (cards tucked inside).

[SEE QUILT page 16]

Notice of Opportunity to Serve on a City of Orinda Commission or Committee

The City of Orinda is seeking applications from *resident volunteers* to serve on the city's:

- Planning Commission (3)
- Parks & Recreation Commission (3)
- Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission (3)
- Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (4)
- Finance Advisory Committee (3)
- Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee (3)

The City of Orinda is also seeking applications from *resident volunteers* to serve as the City's Liaison to the following local agencies:

- Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District Trustee (1)
- Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging (1)
- Representative on the Contra Costa County Library Commission (2)
- County Connection Citizens Advisory Committee (1)
- Contra Costa Transportation Authority Citizen Advisory Committee (1)
- County Connection Accessible Services Committee (1)

Statement of Interest forms are available from the Orinda City Clerk's Office, 22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563. If you have any specific questions regarding the recruitment, please contact Michele Olsen, City Clerk at 925-253-4221 or molsen@cityoforinda.org. Application forms may also be downloaded from the city's website at www.cityoforinda.org.

Completed Statement of Interest forms must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office by Friday, January 13, 2012 at 5 p.m. Qualified applicants for city commission and committee appointments will be invited to interview before the full City Council on Saturday, January 28, 2012.

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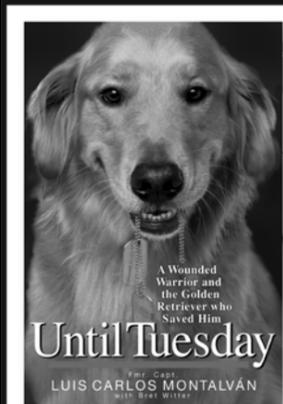
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IN REMEMBRANCE

Obituary . . . Former Orindan Margaret Tharp

Margaret Elizabeth (Barnes) Tharp passed away Oct 20, 2011 in Santa Rosa, CA of heart disease and dementia. She was born April 21, 1918 in Berkeley, CA, daughter of Marion S. and Mabel (Coombs) Barnes, and lived in Oakland, CA during her childhood years.

She attended the University of California, Berkeley, where she was a member of Alpha Chi Omega and she met her husband, Richard Ford Tharp (1917-2003) while at Cal. They were married in Reno, Nevada on Sept. 30, 1939, but World War II put a hold on their lives. Richard served in the army in the Philippines, while Margaret stayed with her parents in Oakland with their daughter, Suzanne Elizabeth.

When the war ended, they moved to Orinda in 1948, where they remained until 1965. After several years in Tiburon, CA, they made the move to Quathiaski Cove, Quadra Island, British Columbia, where they stayed for 11 years until Richard's Parkinson's Disease made it impossible to continue there. At that point they moved to Oakmont, Santa Rosa, CA.

While at Cal, Margaret majored in bacteriology, which led to a job with the Dept. of Public Health in the early 1940's. Most of her life was spent as a housewife, however.

Richard and Margaret traveled extensively all over the world. She was very active with her sorority all her life and had many good friends from her college days. Her favorite hobbies were arts and crafts,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Margaret Elizabeth (Barnes) Tharp in 1942.

and she drew/made art projects for Brownies, Girl Scouts, school dances, and theater back drops, as well as her own oil paintings. Her interest in ceramics started early on and continued during her time in Oakmont.

Margaret leaves a daughter, Suzanne, son-in-law, Pedro Guerra, and grandsons John (and his wife, Jennifer), Michael, and Dan (aka Eddie Spottedfeather), and two great-granddaughters, Lena and Sarah Spottedfeather.

The family held a private family funeral on October 26. Margaret is buried in Sebastopol's Pleasant Hills Cemetery.

Remembering a Very Special Teacher

By CONNIE LEE
Glorietta Elementary School
Parent

"Hey, kids, come here," I called to our four children. "We need to have a family meeting."

"Are we in trouble?" Mitchell asked.

"Is it something good?" Henry added hopefully.

"No," I replied with a heavy heart. "It's about Ms. Johnson." I cast a worried glance at my youngest child, 8-year-old Marisa. My news would hit her the hardest.

Sue Johnson was a beloved teacher at Glorietta Elementary School. My four kids had all been blessed by her upbeat teaching style. Little Marisa had been just a toddler when my oldest son, Bryant, entered Ms. Johnson's third grade class. Marisa loved Bryant's teacher on sight and would give her a hug every time we visited the classroom. The hugs continued as middle brothers, Mitchell and Henry, each spent a year blossoming under Ms. Johnson's care. Now, finally, it was Marisa's turn to be a third grader, and she was thrilled to have Ms. Johnson as her very own teacher for an entire year.

But it seemed that fate had other plans. In November of 2010, Ms. Johnson had announced that she'd be missing several weeks of school around the holidays because she needed to have open-heart surgery to replace a valve. Unfortunately, the surgery went badly, and Ms. Johnson's condition deteriorated despite two more surgical interventions. I knew I must start preparing my children for the inevitable loss.

"Well, Missy," I said gently, "the surgery didn't go as well as the doctors expected."

"I think she'll be OK," Marisa asserted, sliding off my lap and running off to play. I checked my email again shortly before bedtime. As I sat staring at the screen, Marisa came trotting through the room. "Sweetie," I said, "I'm afraid Mrs. Johnson didn't make it."

"Oh," said Marisa. She was quiet for a moment. Then she added, "O.K.," and went on her way as casually as if I'd just told her a play date was cancelled. I left her alone to process her thoughts.

The next day at school, extra staff was on hand to give guidance and support. When I arrived to pick up Marisa at the end of the day, she told me they had talked about Ms. Johnson, but then she spent the rest of the drive home chattering away about her usual interests as if nothing had happened. At home that afternoon, Marisa played hard, ate a good dinner, and retired to the den to watch TV with Henry. When I looked in on them a few minutes later, they were sitting contentedly among a scattering of toys. I bent to pick up a dry-erase message board that they had dropped on the floor. My

heart skipped a beat when I read the words on its smooth white surface. Marisa's neat printing declared: "Dear Santa, All I want for Christmas is a note from Ms. Johnson."

I turned down the television and sat next to Marisa on the daybed. "Missy," I said, "it's not possible for Ms. Johnson to send you a letter now." I remembered how, when my brother died a few years ago, certain small happenings had seemed like hints from heaven to ease my grief. "There will be a sign," I ventured, "Something will happen...there will be some sign that she cares about you."

Looking into my daughter's trusting eyes I promised myself that, if life did not provide an obvious sign, I would help Marisa use her imagination to choose some small event as a symbol of hope.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Sue Johnson, a popular teacher at Glorietta Elementary School, passed away suddenly last December. She is still very much on the minds of her former students.

Two days later, the school held its annual holiday parties before the start of winter vacation. The kids were brimming with excitement. I noticed how they were completely at ease with each other. I knew we had Ms. Johnson to thank for this spirit of mutual respect. She had valued and cherished each one of them, and had taught them to value each other.

At the end of the party, the teacher's aide called above the hustle and bustle, "I have a little gift for each of you. It's a present from Ms. Johnson." She distributed brightly colored gift bags and told the kids to put them into their backpacks.

Marisa's gift remained in her backpack until we reached home. She disappeared into the den and was uncharacteristically quiet for several minutes. I peeked in the door to see her sitting with her arms locked around her knees, gazing at the treasures

[SEE JOHNSON page 14]



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GIFT GIVING

Holiday Shopping In Orinda: Santa Says, "Shop Local!"

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

What do the numbers 2,000, 3,000 and 4,000 mean for Orinda shoppers? Two thousand is the number of balloons Casa Orinda uses to decorate for New Year's Eve; 3,000 is the inventory of toys at Sweet Dreams Toy Store; and 4,000 is the number of theater goers in all Orinda theaters (stage and screen). Only in Orinda can you find shops where Santa's jolly helpers are ready to attend to your every need for the holidays. Doesn't that sound better than traipsing all over the Bay Area?

Who can pass up the unmistakable fragrance of a Christmas tree from McDonnell Nursery (254-3713)? They are at your service and will deliver it for free to your home and place it wherever you wish.

On the Theatre Square side of town,



SALLY HOGARTY

Sweet Dreams in Orinda Theatre Square offers a plethora of gifts for the little ones on your shopping list.

you'll find shops offering gifts and gift certificates, not to mention a spot for a quick nosh. When looking in Theatre Square or along Moraga Way or Orinda Way you will find something delicious to eat that will satisfy everyone in your group. The Theatre Square side of town has lots of shops you've probably already patronized including: Entourage Spa, Morrison's Jewelers, Living Lean, Loard's Ice Cream, Beverages and More (holiday cheer), Cannetti's Bookshop, Orinda Hair Studio and Nail Care, and Peet's Coffee and Tea.

On the Village Square, just off of Orinda Way, you might be dropping off holiday cards at the post office, so why not check out the many options for shopping: McCaulou's Department Store, Orinda Books, Hollyhock Stationery, Orinda Beauty Supply, Rite-Aid, Hilton House and Cheryl's Closet consignment shops, Natural Life vi-

tamin store, In Forma Fitness, Angel Nails, Cindy's Village Nail Care and Elaine's Nails, Lamorinda Martial Arts Studio, Orinda Pet Food and Supply, Orinda Village Horse Shop, Orinda Village Antiques – the list goes on and on.

For more local holiday shopping suggestions, see Bonnie Water's "Everyday Changes" on page 10.



SALLY HOGARTY

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Enter contest by filling your tank at Flying A Gasoline December 2nd or 3rd.

Drawing to be held at Flying A Gas of Orinda, 22 Bryant Way, Orinda, Ca 94563 on Monday, December 5th at 5pm by the Orinda Mayor. Entrants do not need to be present to win the Grand Prizes, but have to claim them within 3 days of posting on our Facebook page or another number will be drawn. One entry per customer. Winners will be posted on Orinda Motors Facebook page on Monday December 6th. Employees of Orinda Motors, Inc. are not eligible for prizes.

GIFT GIVING

Everyday Changes

Holiday Traditions

Bonnie Waters



How much energy do you spend on planning, preparing and presenting your family holiday party? You can mitigate holiday stress by minimizing the amount of energy you spend. I don't mean compromising your holiday tradition but rather sharing the planning, preparation and presentation with other family members.

Why not use this season to create a new tradition of sharing, collaboration and family participation?

Birth a New Holiday Tradition

I received an email from a family member excerpts of which I just had to pass on. This year instead of purchasing cheaply-made goods from overseas, why not concentrate on giving gifts and services made

right here in the good old USA. It's time to think outside the box, people. Who says a gift needs to fit in a shirt box?

Everyone gets his or her hair cut. How about gift certificates from your local hair salon or barber? What about a spa or gym membership? It's appropriate for all ages thinking about some health improvement.

Who wouldn't appreciate having their car detailed? Small, American-owned detail shops and car washes would love to sell you a gift certificate or a book of gift certificates. In fact, Orinda's Flying A gas station specializes in detailing as does the Lafayette Car Wash, which is owned by an Orinda resident.

Are you one of those extravagant givers who think nothing of plunking down the

Benjamins on a foreign-made flat-screen? Perhaps your recipient would like his or her driveway sealed, or lawn mowed for the summer, or games at the local golf course.

There are a bazillion owner-run restaurants – all offering gift certificates right here in Orinda. And, if your intended receiver isn't the fancy eatery sort, what about a half dozen breakfasts at the Orinda Village Café for example?

Remember folks, this isn't about big national chains – this is about supporting your hometown merchants, many with their financial lives on the line.

How many people couldn't use an oil change for their car, truck or motorcycle? Our very own Orinda Motors, Shell, Chevron or Flying A gas stations would be happy to accommodate. Thinking about a heartfelt gift for mom? Wouldn't she just love to be pampered for a day? Think spa gift certificate and make the gift even more special when you buy one for yourself and join your mom in a mother-daughter day at the spa. Entourage Spa, conveniently located in Theatre Square, would be happy to arrange just such a gift. For a one-of-a-



SALLY HOGARTY

You can't go wrong with coffee or a gift certificate from **Peet's Coffee and Teas**.

kind creative gift, try one of the many local crafts fairs and help out a struggling artist at the same time.

For your holiday entertaining, check out the local plays, ballets and musical events listed in the calendar on page 17 of this newspaper. And, remember to plan your holiday outings at local restaurants and leave your server a nice tip.

By following this new tradition, we can help American small businesses to follow their dreams. And, when we care about other Americans, we care about our communities, and the benefits come back to us in ways we couldn't imagine. This is the new American Christmas tradition -- a revolution of caring about each other, and isn't that what Christmas is about? May your holidays be heavenly!

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PLAY RUGBY! Grades 1-12

Registration for Lamorinda Rugby Club is now open for the 2012 season! No prior rugby experience necessary, just a love of fast-paced contact sports. Practices start after Thanksgiving, Nov. 28. Youth season runs through March; High School finishes regular season by end of April.
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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

Orinda Ballet Offers Up a Sweet Treat this December



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Last year's "Nutcracker" transformed the Library Theater into a wonderland of surprises.

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Now in its third year, the Orinda Ballet presents a holiday ballet featuring its 80 young students. Ranging in age from three years to late teens, the students will be twirling and leaping through this year's *A Sweet Dream Nutcracker* scheduled December 9-11 at the Orinda Library Theater.

"I am blessed with such beautiful students," says artistic director and professional dancer Patricia Thompson. "Our youngest dancers will be the peppermint candies while others are the gingerbread cookies, and I will be the baker in one excerpt while our more advanced dancers perform the more difficult dances in Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, including the Pas de Deux."

Thompson has modified the traditional *Nutcracker* to fit a shorter time period and her dancers. "The younger dancers are double cast so that the performance schedule isn't too much for them," Thompson explains. "I really have a good group of kids, and the moms are great – always help-

ing and being supportive." Thompson adds that Orinda Ballet has been well received and has almost tripled in size during its three years.

This year's holiday presentation once again features professional dancers as well as students. David Bier, who performed as the Blue Bird in last season's *Sleeping Beauty*, will be the Prince. A Bay Area native, Bier received his ballet training and at several prestigious schools including San Francisco Ballet School, the Houston Academy, the Pennsylvania Ballet School in Philadelphia, and the School of American Ballet in New York. He danced with numerous professional ballet companies before joining the Corps de Ballet of San Francisco Opera in 1994 where he was made a tenured dancer in 1996.

Performing the roles of Drosselmeyer and the Mouse King is Kendall Sparks, who has danced with such companies as Berkeley Ballet, Delta Festival Ballet of New Orleans, Boston Ballet, Dennis Wayne Dancers (Italy-Australia), Cleveland/San Jose Ballet, Miami City Ballet, and Diablo Ballet. The Sugar Plum Fairy and Arabian

will be performed by up and coming young dancer Casey Turner. Turner trained with Alonzo King's Lines in San Francisco and will also be dancing the Sugar Plum Fairy with Oakland Ballet this year. She will share the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy with Orinda Ballet student Brooke Lyness.

A Sweet Dream Nutcracker performs December 9 at 6:30 p.m., December 10 at 1 and 5 p.m., and December 11 at 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the Orinda Library Theater. Tickets are \$18 and can be purchased at the Community Center Office or by calling 254-2445. Early reservations are recommended as the event sells out each year.



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Hospice Tree of Lights Will Brighten Orinda Village

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Hospice of the East Bay and the Orinda Chamber of Commerce invite the public to its 25th annual Tree of Lights ceremony to be held on December 3 at 4:30 p.m. in Orinda Village near the Bank of America building.

Choirs from the various schools will perform followed by the lighting of the tree and a visit from Santa Claus. Members of Hospice Orinda will provide popcorn and other goodies while the Orinda Chamber of Commerce will oversee the photos with Santa.



DAVID DIERKS

The Oak Tree in Village Square.

[SEE HOSPICE page 14]

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Move of the Month

Reclining Abs!



1. Lie on back. Flex knees to 90 degrees. Keep feet flat on the floor.



For more information contact Sheena with Living Lean personal training and eating for elite fitness, at 925-360-7051 or www.thelivingleanprogram.com.



2. Slowly lift the upper body off the floor allowing the head to drop back away from the chest when in the up position.

3. Slowly lower back, stop and hold the position for 2 seconds, and lower 2 more times before tapping the shoulder blades to the floor and returning back up.

Yoga For A Stress-Free Holiday Season

By JEANNE DOWELL
Contributing Writer

Start now – don't wait! Give yourself the stress-reducing holiday gift of yoga. Once November begins, I always feel a "head rush" of what is to come.

Decorations seem to surround us earlier each year and remind us of all that needs to be done. There is probably no other time of year when our emotional life is "up for grabs" more so than now. Memories of the past come to mind, sometimes recalling the sickness of loss of a loved one. These memories can be magnified and experienced at a deeper level at this time of year. We must have an antidote to counter-balance this busyness and feeling of being wired within.

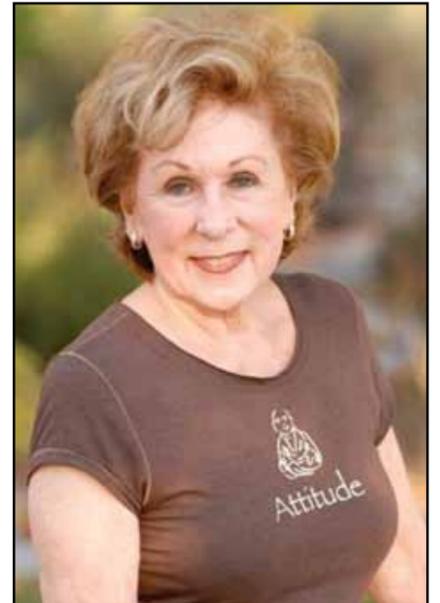
Renowned yoga teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar says, "The main purpose of yoga is to tone the nervous system." The practice of yoga will always bring us face to face with ourselves. So before the "tail begins to wag the dog," we need to take time out every day to be quiet and experience life more peacefully.

Yoga offers us a way to achieve a more peaceful path through the weeks ahead. We often put our own needs last and slack off on our exercise and yoga classes during the holidays.

Many people deal with depression during this season. When we are feeling depressed, it can be helpful to connect with others who accept us as we are. We often find this in a yoga class.

"There is still some mystery about the physiology of depression," says Patricia Walden, a respected yoga instructor in Boston. "Research shows that serotonin plays a significant role. It's reasonable to assume that improving circulation in the endocrine glands that produce these hormones will enhance their function."

Yoga is an excellent way to improve circulation, and specific postures can alleviate depression. Especially helpful are postures that open the chest to help us breathe more



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Jeanne Dowell believes in reducing stress and inspiring gratitude.

fully and deeply. A very simple position is to lie down on the floor with a blanket rolled under the length of your spine. Keep buttocks on the floor, and head level; stretch your arms beside the body about 6-8 inches. This will expand the rib cage and open the chest in order for us to release pent up emotions and tightness through the upper body. Now, simply practice long, slow deep inhalations and long, slow, deep exhalations – focus on the breath as it moves in and out of the body.

For people who have practiced yoga before, back bends are excellent for releasing emotions which can cause depression.

Here are a few ideas that one can call "mental yoga."

Keep a simple journal and every day write three to five things for which you are thankful.

Practice mindfulness daily. For example, deliberately slow down by walking at one-half your usual pace and notice yourself walking.

Pause for three seconds before replying
[SEE YOGA page 16]



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– Sandy Hinck, Orinda

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STUDENTS / ROTARY

Oakland Strokes' Teams Glide to Victory

By DIANE MOE
Contributing Writer

The Oakland Strokes Rowing Club has had a busy season full of great race results. The women's varsity eight took first place out of 75 boats in late October in the youth eights women high school category at the nation's largest rowing race, the Head of the Charles Regatta on the Charles River in Boston.

The Oakland team powered through the three-mile course in 17 minutes, 12 seconds – nine seconds ahead of its closest competitor, the Marin Rowing Club. In a sport long dominated by East Coast rowing teams, the one-two finish by Oakland and Marin was a major surprise. The win was the first ever in the women's portion of the regatta for a West Coast rowing team.

In the Stokes' boat were Orinda residents Sara Cratsenburg and Lauren Dahlberg-Seeth, both from Miramonte High school, and Brittany Preston, who attends College Prep in Oakland.

The regatta is the second largest two-day regatta in the world, attracting almost 9,000 athletes in 61 events. Some 300,000 spectators packed the shore and the four bridges that spanned the twisting course.

The women's varsity eight ended the month of October with a third-place finish in the Head of the American Regatta on Saturday at Lake Natoma. The men's varsity finished fourth in the event. Sponsored by the Sacramento State Aquatic Center, nearly 500 entries from 61 clubs in five states participated.

The women's boat included Miramonte students Lizzie Pate, Ellen Pate, and Michelle Lee, while the men's boat included Miramonte students Cameron Baker, Ryan Sandy, and coxswain Mathison Young.

The Strokes continued their victories in early November with the women's varsity eight and four both taking first place in the women's high school category at the Newport Autumn Rowing Festival on November 6. The eight boat sped through the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Oakland Strokes women's eight won the prestigious Head of the Charles regatta. (L-R) Coach Derek Byrnes, Sara Cratsenburg (Orinda), Alia Shafi, Alex Ohman, Krissy Lukins, Amanda Rutherford, Corinne Bozzini, Lauren Dahlberg-Seeth (Orinda), Brittany Preston (Orinda), Michelle Popelka, and coach Cass Cunningham.

4,500-meter course in 17 minutes, 33 seconds, while the four boat clocked in at 19 minutes, 35 seconds. Among the eights, the Strokes women had five boats in the top 13 finishers. The eight's boat included Orinda residents Brittany Preston (College Prep) and Lauren Dahlberg-Seeth (Miramonte).

Oakland Strokes, a 150-member junior rowing club for middle and high school students, has sent countless student-athletes to college rowing programs across the country. Each year, the Strokes competitive boats place strongly in local, regional and national championship regattas. Its boathouse is on the Oakland estuary near the High Street Bridge.

For more information, call 925-377-0255 or 925-878-1677.



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Lamorinda Sunshine Rotary's Handbuilt Canoe Helps Others



TOM BLACK

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary members Pat Flaharty (L) and John Fazel take "Tippy" out for a run at San Pablo Reservoir.

By BOBBIE DODSON
Staff Writer

Orindans Janet and Norm Pease won the handcrafted canoe constructed by members of the Lamorinda Sunshine Rotary Club, for which some \$17,000 of raffle tickets were sold.

Janet says, "We're thrilled to have won this beautiful boat. While we may take it on the lake at our home in Elk Lake, Oregon, we plan to hang it on a wall where we know it will be admired by our family and friends." Prior to its journey to Oregon, "Tippy" will be stored in a hangar at Buchanan Field, where Norm keeps his private aircraft.

Janet had come to watch Norm compete in the Lafayette Reservoir Run, where he finished second in his class, when John Fazel approached her to purchase a ticket.

She agreed "because I know what good things Rotary does." Twenty minutes later, as the two enjoyed the pancake breakfast, it was announced they had the winning ticket.

Rotary member Gary Fulcher, who had previously built 10 canoes, conceived the project last January. Twelve Sunshine Rotarians contributed \$150 each and agreed to work four hours a week on the construction. Completed in August, they figure 1,000+ man-hours were invested in the construction process, which included over 200 strips of African rosewood veneer, hand cut and manually applied, maple wood for the gunnels and thwarts, and two hand-woven cane seats. Rotary canoe workers included Rick Ashburn, Paul Bettelheim, Chuck Bove, Ron Brown, Kevin Croak, Michael Edwards, John Fazel, Pat Flaharty, Charlie Franklin, Gary Fulcher, Bob Heinen, Ken

[SEE CANOE page 14]

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Something to Howl About...
Animal Tales

Celebrate all the critter in our lives

Jennifer Conroy



Holidays are here and no matter which ones you do or do not celebrate if you are an animal lover, critters will play a part in holiday celebrations. Now sit down for what I am about to share. According to a poll published by Reuters, \$56 million was spent on doggie gifts alone in the last year. That's right...\$56 million! That amount is anticipated to reach \$73 million by the end of this year, according to the nonprofit American Pet Products Association.

Let's consider the recipients of those gifts for a moment. Was your dog's quality of life improved by that tug toy? Was your cat's purring time extended by that catnip mouse? Chances are that you will say yes and, in fact, canine gifts, such as tug toys, where you pull one end while your dog pulls the other, absolutely do enrich the bond between you. As for cats, who doesn't want the cats in their lives to enjoy some extra self indulgence.

So, yes, pet gifts can and do enrich the lives of your pets and you as well. Dogs love interactive toys – ones that require human partnership. Tossing a squeaky toy at your dog and walking away is really saying, "Go play by yourself; I can't be bothered." Not only that, chances are your dog will quickly dissect that toy, remove the squeaker, and, gulp, possibly eat it. And while cats may not be interested in playing a game of tug with you, what cat wouldn't enjoy a brand new cat perch with a window view.

In choosing any items for your pets, think safety first, and, when in doubt, check with your veterinarian or your local animal shelter for recommendations. Think, too, about gifts that will truly benefit your pets. Are your pets up to date on vaccinations? Are they microchipped? Do they need new collars or ID tags? How about a nice new flea comb or grooming brush? And don't forget the greatest gift of all – time shared with your pet.

Perhaps the most precious gifts you can consider during the holidays are those you make as donations to animal organizations you favor. You can even make such gifts in the name of your own pet! There is a multitude to choose among including local animal shelters, animal rescue programs, breed specific organizations, agencies helping birds, marine mammals, wildlife, horses, elephants, you name it. They all need help, and you can find the ones worthy of your support by going to www.guidestar.org, a service that lists nonprofit organizations and provides reports on them for the public to view.

For every animal in your life that is loved and well cared for, there are hundreds and hundreds that are not so fortunate. So, yes, celebrate the season with your animal friends, but, don't forget the ones that are not so lucky and can use some special help this time of year.

Happy Holidays to all creatures big and small!

Company C Ballet Partners With EFO For Family Pack Discount Tickets

Company C Contemporary Ballet is partnering with the Educational Foundation of Orinda (EFO) to offer tickets to select performances of the ballet company's 10th Anniversary Season Winter Program. For every full priced ticket sold to an EFO supporter, the company will donate \$10 of the ticket price to EFO. Benefit tickets are priced \$45 for orchestra seating, available for the following Winter Program performances: Leshner Center for the Arts, January 20-21 and the Novellus Theater at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco,

February 17 and 19. For the matinee performance at the Leshner Center for the Arts at 3 p.m. on January 21, children 12 and under come for free with purchase of one full priced benefit ticket. Maximum of 4 children per ticket sold. Most appropriate for children 7 and older. Offer not available online.

Benefit ticket buyers must use the code "ENRICH" when ordering tickets. Details of programs, dates and venues may be found at www.companycballet.org.
– Carolyn Stewart

◆ JOHNSON from page 8

laid out before her on the floor: a pencil, a snow-man-shaped eraser, a candy cane and a bright red slip of paper. Grabbing the paper, she held it out to me and said, with a hint of triumph: "It's a note!"

I took it from her hand and read the typewritten message.

"Happy Holidays!" it said. "This is a gift certificate for one free night of homework! Just tape it into your homework log on the night you would like to use it. Enjoy your vacation! Love, Ms. Johnson."

I knelt beside her. "That's great, Missy!" I enthused. "You got exactly what you wished for: a note from Ms. Johnson."

"I know," she said, tilting her head pensively to one side, "but I still feel sad."

"Of course you do, honey," I agreed. "I feel sad too. But we have some things to be happy about too. I'm glad that you were able to have her for your teacher. And I'm happy she cared about you so much that she

wrapped a present for you before she went to the hospital. She was very busy, and she wasn't feeling very good, but she loved you so much that she made sure you would get a present from her at the holiday party."

"Yeah, I'm happy about that too," Marisa said. "I know she loved me."

The holiday gift bag, with note inside, was perfectly in keeping with Ms. Johnson's standard procedures. Thoughtfulness, for her, had been far more than an occasional impulsive gesture. She'd been the kind of teacher who kept track of her former students through the years and sent congratulatory notes upon their graduation from high school. Of course, she would have prepared Christmas gifts for her third graders before entering the hospital!

She could not have known that one of those notes would grant a special Christmas wish to a bereaved little girl. But she did know that it's important to take time to recognize and appreciate the people you love.

◆ CANOE from page 13

Thomas and Spike Speicher, plus friends Frank Beavers and Denny Dingman.

Ron Brown says, "The project was fulfilling in every possible way. Helping to produce this true work of art was a real joy. Being able to significantly provide financial support to local and international service projects with the proceeds from the raffle made it all worthwhile."

Projects benefiting from the "Tippy" Canoe raffle are the HOME team, Literacy, Lafayette Reservoir permanent stage, Food Bank, LN4Hand, Polio Eradication, and neighboring Rotary Clubs' favorite projects.



Orinda Sunrise Rotary's John Fazel (L) with raffle winners Janet and Norm Pease.

ects. The Lafayette Noon Rotary Club was singled out as being especially helpful.

◆ HOSPICE from page 11

Proceeds from the purchase of a light on the tree benefit the work Hospice does to provide medical, emotional, spiritual and practical support for patients and families coping with the end of life. The suggested tax-deductible donation for a light is \$25, and they can be purchased through the

Hospice website, www.hospiceeastbay.org or by sending a check to Hospice of the East Bay, 3470 Buskirk Ave., Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. Be sure and note that you want your light on the Orinda tree and include the name of the person being remembered or honored.

For more information on the tree lighting ceremony, call the Orinda Chamber of Commerce at 254-3909.



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CAR TIME / HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CAR TIME

Price Shopping for Car Repairs is Tricky

by JOHN VANEK



What is one of the first things that goes through your mind when something goes wrong with your car? How much is it going to cost to fix it? That is what everyone wants to know. I understand that it is frustrating to have an unexpected repair staring you in the face with no idea how much money it will set you back. The first reaction is to call someone and try to get information on what it is going to cost to fix your vehicle. In some cases, you may get an estimate that is close, but in most cases you will not.

The problem is trying to determine what a vehicle needs without checking it in person. It is virtually impossible to diagnose a problem over the phone. If you call around and describe the symptom, it is likely that some auto service professional will throw out an educated guess. Many motorists will take that phone diagnosis to heart and start calling around price shopping to get the best price for that repair. Now, you have multiple prices for a repair that probably will not fix your car. Remember that there is more to good repair than price alone. By the time you get your vehicle to a shop, you will be lucky if it is the same price quoted over the phone. When a technician has the car in the shop, he or she has the advantage of checking the car in person and can accurately estimate the repair. The technician can look at related items on the car, consider other variables that could relate to a good repair like age, mileage or even abuse. With the whole picture available, a proper

diagnosis can be performed and a game plan formulated.

Another common scenario is what I call "tow truck syndrome." Your car gets towed, and the tow truck driver guesses at what is wrong without using any tools or diagnostic equipment. Sometimes the guess is correct. But, if you accept that guess alone, you could end up replacing a perfectly good part.

There are two phases that need to be completed when you have a broken car: diagnosis and repair. In some cases, the problem can be corrected during the diagnosis process. In most cases, there is a failed component that will require replacement. The time spent to figure out what is wrong with the car will mean more money. Nobody that I know works for free unless they are volunteering. If you can get a professional automotive technician to volunteer their service to diagnose your vehicle, you are probably related to them.

What it comes down to is having a regular facility that you trust so you can eliminate the phone guess situation. You can trust that they will properly diagnose your car, charge you a fair price, and stand behind the repair. Having a steady "go-to" facility will end the guessing game and chaos. As usual, I recommend following factory maintenance recommendations and having your vehicles checked regularly so that you can attempt to avoid the need for any of this.

For questions, email john@orindamotors.com.

Classic Car Show Raises \$4,000 for Orinda Historical Society



DAVID DIERKS

Chip Herman (L) and Orinda Motors owner Allen Pennebaker present Lucy Hupp Williams of the Orinda Historical Society with a check for \$4,000. The money is part of the proceeds from the Orinda Classic Car Show.

By DAVID DIERKS
Staff Writer

The successful 7th annual Orinda Classic Car Show hosted by Orinda Motors and Chip Herman netted over \$45,000 for local charities. The Orinda Historical Society, in coordination with Orinda Motors, provided historical memorabilia which was paired with vintage vehicles for the car show. The car show presented the Orinda Historical Society with \$4,000 this year, doubling the amount that was raised for the society last year.

The Orinda Historical Society is a non-profit organization which works to preserve the history of the Orinda area. The society hosts a museum, located on the ground

floor of the Orinda Library, which is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3 to 5 p.m., or by appointment. It is best to call ahead if planning a visit because the museum is volunteer staffed and their hours may vary. To schedule an appointment, call 254-1353.

Additional organizations benefiting from the show are the Seniors Around Town program, the Educational Foundation of Orinda (EFO), Campolindo High School auto shop class, Orinda Chamber of Commerce, and the Orinda Rotary. For more information about the Orinda Classic Car Show, visit www.orindacarshow.com.

For more information about the Orinda Historical Society, visit www.orindahistory.org.

Historical Society Celebrates Orinda Theatre and Loard's Ice Cream

The Orinda Historical Society's Holiday party takes place on December 7, from 6 - 9 p.m., at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way in Orinda.

This year the group celebrates 70 years of movies at the beautiful Orinda Theatre and 60 years of delicious sweets at Loard's Ice Cream. To add a bit of history to the festivities, former ushers from the Orinda Theatre's earlier days will speak including Colette Kersten, Malia Martin, Gay Worth, Mary Lee Schaffarzick, and Dina Fiatarone. Current Loard's owners, Brooks and Brad Stubblefield, will also speak.

Dinners are \$40 each and include a choice of filet mignon with bordelaise sauce, chicken with tarragon dijon sauce, and butternut squash lasagna.

Dinner reservations are due by December 1. Call 254-1353 to make your entree choice. Checks can be sent to the Orinda Historical Society, P.O. Box 82, Orinda, CA 94563.




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CONTINUATIONS

◆ GATE from page 1

was an appropriate action when the gate was originally installed," added Swanson. The gate was originally erected as a chain and bollard barrier; however, the chain was continually being cut. The Public Works department replaced the chain and bollard barrier with barricades and posted signs saying "Not a Through Road." The barriers were continually being moved and the current gate was erected in 1998.

During the TSAC meeting on September 9, Police Chief Jeffrey Jennings explained that while all officers do not carry a key to the gate, the beat officer does have a key. Jennings said "there is continued vandalism of the gate and a safety concern exists. Additionally, the officers are forced to spend time up at the gate due to illicit activities." It is Jennings opinion that "there is no reason to have a gate...there is not enough traffic."

This is not the first time that the Stein Way gate issue has been presented to the City Council. Problems stem from the description of the Stein Way/Knickerbocker Lane intersection. In 1994, the City Council discussed whether to make it a through road or if it was to be an Emergency Vehicle Access (EVA) road. At that time, the decision

was made to leave the road an EVA.

In 1997, there were two petitions brought to the City Council, one requesting that through access be made available to Moraga Way from Knickerbocker Lane via the new improvement at Stein Way, and the second requesting that the gate be made permanent and only EVA should be allowed. Again, the decision was to leave the road an EVA only.

In January of 1998, the issue came up again, when the city received a letter from residents that stated: "The gate is not a 'crash gate' and is unsafe. We would like the decision on the gate reversed for safety reasons," which reopened the debate. The final decision then was to leave it as an EVA and to install the permanent gate. Later in 1998, during EBMUD construction on Brookwood Road, the gate was temporarily opened from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. There were many people opposed to this opening at that time and complaints were made to the City Council when the gate was left open over a weekend.

For more information, visit www.ci.orinda.ca.us, click on City Meetings and then click on Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC).

◆ QUILT from page 7

"We're doing lots of projects, not just the blankets," said Pete Schmitt, who served two tours in Iraq. His son set his father up with the chaplain corps, who are "there to relieve the stress of death and other matters." And those matters include phone cards for troops without the means to phone home and special food packages.

On a recent Monday afternoon, nine women stood around tables in the blanket

project. But they don't stop when they leave the church. Juanita Gilbertson has so far knitted 45 caps that fit beneath a battle helmet. She estimates it takes two and a half evenings to make a single one. "If your husband watches sports, it's a great way to spend time with him," she said.

Lisa Michaels is trying to estimate how many "Home Makeover" television shows it takes to complete a quilt. Scarves are faster: Diana Yorgin, Ann Brohm, Sharon Tissue and Elaine Nielsen have knitted more of them that they can count.

Acalanes High School District Recognizes Parent Volunteers



(L-R) Arlene White, Carolyn Boord, Laura Reiling, and Chris Banard. Not pictured is Vanessa Crews.

By JILL RAMSAY
Contributing Writer

The Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Governing Board recently recognized its 2011 Sue Stauffer Friends of Education honorees. Sue Stauffer was an outstanding individual dedicated to supporting public education.

In her memory, the AUHSD created the Sue Stauffer Friends of Education Award presented annually to those extraordinary volunteers that make the AUHSD an exemplary district. This year's recipients include Arlene White, a parent volunteer from Miramonte High School, and Vanessa Crews, a retiring AUHSD board member and Orinda resident, among others.

If you were to paint a picture of a parent volunteer, Arlene White would have to be included in that painting. As a class parent advisor, White dedicated four years of service to the students and parents of the Class of 2011. She was responsible for all communications to class parents. She not only recruited parents to help with Junior Prom, Senior Breakfast, Senior Ball, Baccalaureate and Grad Night, but she also took an active role in each of these events. In addition, she guided the student leader-

ship in all of their community service and fundraising efforts for four years as well as serving as a parent leader for the swim team. She organized team dinners, photos, special meets, and countless field trips.

Vanessa Crews retired from the AUHSD governing board in November 2010, after providing nine years of thoughtful leadership and service in that volunteer elected position. Prior to serving on the governing board, Crews was an extremely active parent volunteer in the Miramonte and the AUHSD community. Driven by the simple philosophy of providing what was best for students, she provided the foundation, leadership and guidance for all the successful district parcel tax and bond measure campaigns of the past two decades. She has been a true visionary for technology in the classroom, guiding the district's communication system into the 21st century with website development, eCommunications, and other promotional communication systems.

Other 2011 Sue Stafford recipients included: Laura Reiling, Acalanes High School parent volunteer; Chris Banard, a Campolindo High School volunteer and basketball coach; and Carolyn Boord, Las Lomas High School parent volunteer.

◆ YOGA from page 12

in a conversation, by silently counting to three – then answer.

Reach very slowly for an object, such as a pencil or salt and pepper shakers, to help you remain mindful of your actions.

When you find yourself rushing, stop and pause. Say to yourself, "Rushing creates violence," according to theologian Thomas Merton.

And remember, as we usher in a new year, whatever circumstances come to us in life, they are not for our destruction, but for our evolution.

Orinda resident Jeanne Dowell teaches yoga at the Orinda Community Center and the Hacienda in Moraga. Jeanne and her daughter, Dana Windatt, are spreading the message, "Attitude of Gratitude" with their unique business, Green Buddha. Visit www.TheGreenBuddha.com for more details.



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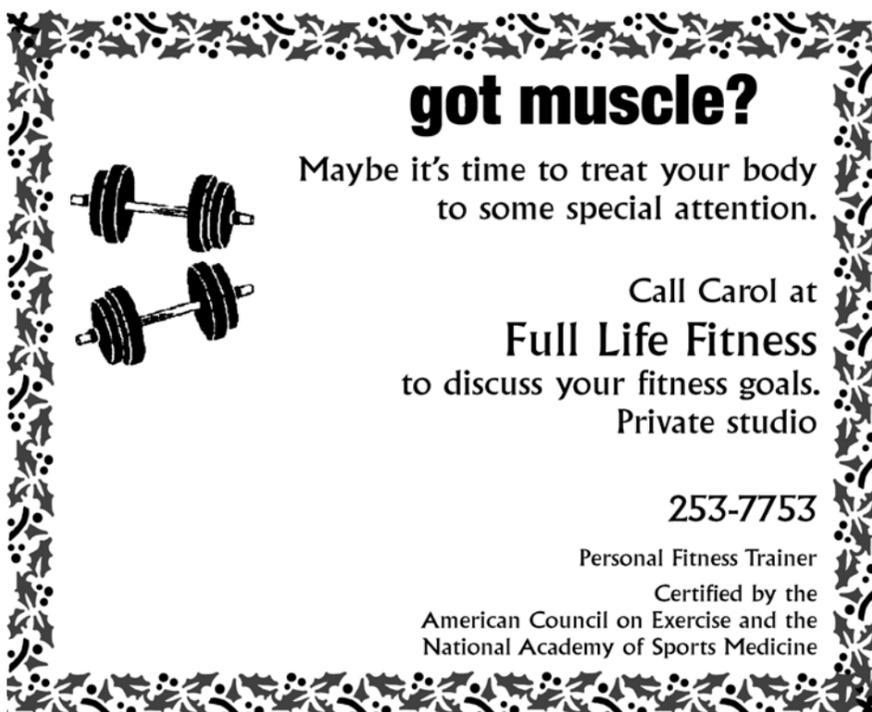
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ON THE CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 1 **Orinda Books** hosts publishers Ron Shoop of Random House, Wendy Pearl of Penguin Books, and Dandy Conway of Random House Children's Books who will offer suggestions for holiday gifts and seasonal reading. Also raffle and refreshments, 276 Village Square, 2 p.m. Call 254-7606.
Hilton House Design and Consignment open house, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m., 21 Orinda Way. Food music and dancing. Call 254-1113.
Moraga Art Gallery features guest artist Susan Heller's fabric art and quilts through Dec. 24, 570 Center Street, Rheem Shopping Center. Open Tuesday through Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Call 376-5407.
- 2 **Flying A Gasoline**, grand opening celebration. Also, Dec. 3, 22 Bryant Way. All Day **10th Annual Overhill Road Holiday Boutique** with handmade gifts and food items by more than 30 local artisans, 1 Tarabrook Drive, noon to 8 p.m. Also Dec. 3 and 4, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free admission. Portion of proceeds benefits Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Call 254-3944.
- 3 **Voices of Musica Sacra** sing *Carols Old and New* from Europe, Britain, Canada and America including recent and medieval carols, St. Francis of Assisi Church, 860 Grove Road, Concord, 2 p.m. Second performance on Dec. 4, St. Stephen Catholic Church, 1101 Keaveny Court, Walnut Creek, 2 p.m. Visit www.vmschorus.org.
Hospice Tree Lighting 4:30, Orinda Village. Call 254-3909.
- 4 **Advent Celebration** with crafts and decorating, candlelight carol singing and potluck supper, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 4 to 7 p.m. \$5 suggested donation (\$20 maximum per family).
- 7 **Orinda Historical Society Holiday Party** with dinner, dessert and movies to celebrate 70 years of the Orinda Theatre and 60 years of Loard's Ice Cream, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 6 to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$40. Reservations due by Dec. 1. Call 254-1353 or visit www.orindahistory.org.
- 8 **Winter Instrumental Concert** at Miramonte High School, 750 Moraga Way, 7:30 p.m. Call 280-3930.
- 9 **Orinda Arts Council Annual Holiday Luncheon** with holiday songs by Orinda Idol singers and highlights from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Orinda Intermediate School's Bulldog Theatre Company, Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, noon to 2 p.m. Tickets are \$22. RSVP to Myrna Witt at keyofm@aol.com.
Orinda Books hosts Orinda ceramic artist Gerry Wallace and plein aire painter Paul Kratter in a holiday exhibition and sale, 276 Village Square, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 254-7606.
- 10 **Contra Costa Children's Chorus**, Dr. Martin Benvenuto, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Pleasant Hill, 10 a.m. Also Dec. 16 at 7 p.m., Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church. Featuring premier performance of "Reading of the Names" tribute to World Trade Center firefighters. For tickets, call 925-945-7101 x 2 or www.childrenschorus.org
- 14 **Orinda Books** hosts Luis Carlos Montalvan (and his service dog) discussing his book, *Until Tuesday: A Wounded Warrior and the Golden Retriever Who Saved Him*, 276 Village Square, 3 p.m. Call 254-7606.
Miramonte High School Winter Choral Concert 750 Moraga Way, 7:30 p.m. Call 280-3930. Also Dec. 15.
Orinda Intermediate School, winter concert 7 p.m. Call 925-258-3090.

AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified. The library will be closed Dec. 23 through 26 for the Christmas holidays.

- 1 **Friends of the Library Book Sale**, Book Shop and Sorting Room, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- 6 **Toddler Lapsit**, stories, songs and fingerplays for infants to 3-year-olds and their caregivers, 10 to 10:30 a.m. and 10:30 to 10:55 a.m. Drop-ins welcome, but limit attendance to once per week. Also Dec. 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21.
Peek-A-Boo Time with songs, stories, rhymes and rhythm for newborns through 1-year-olds and their caregivers, 11:30 to 11:55 a.m. Also Dec. 13 and 20.
Twelfth Night Singers quintet sings Christmas carols, old and new. All ages welcome, 6:30 to 7:25 p.m.
- 9 **Mystery Book Club** members discuss their favorite genre, Tutoring Room, 3 to 4:30 p.m. This month's book is *The Thin Man* by Dashiell Hammett. New members welcome.
- 13 **Berkeley Repertory Theatre** docent discusses the theatre's latest production, *The Wild Bride*, adult program, 7 to 7:55 p.m.
- 14 **Author Francis Tapon** discusses his new book, *Hidden Europe: What Eastern Europeans Can Teach Us*, about his travels through Eastern Europe, adult program, 6:30 to 7:25 p.m.
- 17 **Friends of the Library Christmas Book Sale**, Book Shop and Sorting Room, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- 28 **Holiday Tot Hop** features seasonal music and dancing for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, Gallery Room, 10 to 11 a.m.

CLUB MEETINGS

- Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Masonic Center. Contact Karen Seaborn, 689-0995.
- Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe**. Third Monday, 7:30 p.m., Moraga-Orinda Fire District Conference Room, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, www.moragaadobe.org.
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**. Fourth Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library, 253-1997.
- Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition**, every third Wednesday, 10 to 11:30 a.m. at Orinda City Hall Sarge Littlehale Room. Call 687-8844, ext. 227.
- Lamorinda Sirs for retired men**. Second Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga. Luncheon speakers plus golf, tennis, bocce, bridge and astronomy. Call Pete Giers, 254-4667.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**. Every Friday, 7 a.m., Postino's, Lafayette, 254-0440, ext. 463.
- Lamorinda Toastmasters**. Every Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Temple Isaiah, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, www.lamorinda.freetoasthost.net.
- Montelindo Garden Club**. Third Friday, September through May, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 9 a.m., www.montelindogarden.com.
- Orinda Juniors Women's Club** community service group. First Tuesday, September to June, 7 p.m. Contact Julie Mercer or Charlene Robinson at info@orindajuniors.org or www.orindajuniors.org.
- Orinda Rotary**. Every Wednesday, noon, Community Center, 28 Orinda Way, 254-2222.
- Orinda Association**. Second Monday, 7:15 p.m., Orinda Library, May Room, 254-0800.
- Orinda Hiking Club**. Hike every Wednesday, 9 a.m., old library parking lot on Irwin Way. Call

Orinda Garden Club Members Ensure a Colorful Spring



SALLY HOGARTY

Orinda Garden Club members (L-R) Caroline Hayes, Gail Emmons, Jane Zuercher (standing on right) Midge Zischke and Gina Field were among the dedicated gardeners who planted bulbs throughout Orinda in early November. The busy group is also partnering with Boy Scout Troop 237 to decorate and hang 60 wreaths around town.

First Friday Forum Series Kicks off January 6 With Talk by Marty Beard

By BOBBIE DODSON
Staff Writer

The First Friday Forum begins the year with a most timely topic, "The Global Impact of Mobile Technology" on January 6 at 1 p.m. Presented by Marty Beard, president of Sybase 365, this forum is the first of six running from January through June. Sponsored by the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC), the series offers an interesting mix of speakers and subjects.

"We are delighted to offer these lectures to the Lamorinda community," says Judy Nielsen, chair of the committee. "Our series this year has a group of outstanding speakers whose expertise on their subjects will provide new insights into current happenings here and further afield."

The lineup for 2012 following Beard's January 6 appearance includes:

February 3 - "The Arab Spring: Causes and Consequences" with Glen Robinson,

Associate Professor of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School; March 3 - "China and the World" with Zhan Li, Dean of St. Mary's College Economics and Business Administration; April 13 - "Electric Cars Are Here" with Leslie Baroody, Electric Vehicle Team Leader for the California Energy Commission; May 4 - "Caldecott Tunnel 4th Bore Project Update" by Ivy Morrison, Public Information Officer for the Caldecott 4th Bore Project; and June 1 - "Islam and Peaceful Pluralism: Modern Challenges and Opportunities" with Jennifer Bryson, Director of the Islam and Civil Society Project at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, New Jersey.

"We invite everyone to mark their 2012 calendars now so they won't miss any of these excellent lectures," says Nielsen. All forums will be held at 1:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of LOPC, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Refreshments will be served in Fellowship Hall at 1 p.m.

Steve at 253-0131 or visit www.orindahiking.org.

Orinda Historical Society. Third Wednesday, 5 p.m., Historical Society Museum, 26 Orinda Way, 254-1353. Holiday Social on Dec. 7, 6 p.m. with dinner and a speaker, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way.

Orinda Job's Daughters. First and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 283-7176.

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

Orinda Teen Advisory Council. Second Wednesday, 4 p.m., Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. For information, email orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com.

Orinda Woman's Club. Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon, call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.

Tax-Aide. Contra Costa County AARP Tax-Aide seeks volunteers to provide free tax preparation help for individuals of all ages. Volunteers are trained by Tax-Aide and become IRS certified tax counselors. Orientation is in November and classes for tax counselors start in January. Call LaVerne Gordon at 726-3199.

Send calendar items to Maggie Sharpe at m.sharpe66@gmail.com

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BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 20

Berkeley, where he studied pre-law and public policy, graduating in 1997. While a student, Hayder worked at Meesha's, his family's restaurant located one block from the Cal campus. "Most of the football team came to our restaurant on a regular basis," explains Hayder.

Voted Best Mediterranean Food by Lamorinda Mom's Club in 2011, every item on the menu is freshly made daily, with the



VALERIE HOTZ

Talal "Tee" Hayder of Turquoise Mediterranean Grill.

exception of the pita bread and French fries. The lamb and beef combo is a favorite of the Miramonte students. "Our lamb and beef combo has no preservatives, no additives and contains 1/3 lamb and 2/3 beef. The lamb adds moisture to the beef and the kids love it," says Hayder. Kebob wraps, chicken over rice falafel and kubbeh are popular dishes. "We recently added kubbeh to our menu. This non-vegetarian falafel features a cracked wheat shell combined with beef, garlic, onions and parsley.

Turquoise Mediterranean Grill caters lunches to three local schools. "We are very pleased we earned a 4 1/2 star rating on Yelp. It is the highest rating by Yelp for a restaurant in all of Orinda," adds Hayder

Mary Chatton Brown Received Distinguished Realtor Award

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

The California Association of Realtors recently honored Orinda's Mary Chatton Brown with the California Distinguished Realtor Award for 2011.

The unique, statewide recognition cites Brown's outstanding service and contributions at the local, state and national levels, strict adherence to the principles of the Realtors' code of ethics, and a commitment to civic activity and business.

A Realtor with Prudential California Realty, Brown had previously been named as the Realtor of the Year by the Contra Costa Association of Realtors (CCAR). She has also been president of the association and chaired numerous committees and task forces at the local, state and national levels. "Nobody deserves this more than Mary," says Fred Weston, CCAR board president. "Her commitment to leadership and excellence, her involvement and strong ties to the local community serve as a shining example to all of us."

Brown has lived in Orinda since 1962 and been an active member with the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Before beginning

with a broad smile. "We are blessed by the Orinda community and grateful for the way this community embraced us. That means so much to Turquoise," adds Hayder.

Turquoise Mediterranean Grill is open seven days a week, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. For more information and to view menu selections, go to the website at www.turqgrill.com. Call 253-2004 to place your take-out order.



CONTRIBUTE PHOTO

Mary Chatton Brown of Prudential California Realty.

her successful career in real estate, Brown worked for various media outlets. She began as a tour guide for NBC at Rockefeller Center in New York while in college and then worked for CBS affiliate KNXT in Los Angeles, and KCBS radio in San Francisco.

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BUSINESS BUZZ

Business Buzz Putting a Personal Face on Local Business

Valerie Hotz



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Hilton House Consign/ Design & Estate Liquidations

After completely redoing the interior design of her home, Cyndi Girgis was looking for a project in her retirement when she developed the concept of a high end consignment shop for Orindans. Located at 21 Orinda Way – across the street from the Orinda Library – Girgis hosts the 10th anniversary party on December 1 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. as a way of saying thank you to her customers. Food, drinks, music and dancing will be featured, along with every item in both showrooms being offered at reduced price.

More popularly known as “Hilton House,” this full service business offers estate sale service to customers who come from all over the Bay Area. “Many of our customers seek our assistance when redecorating. We carry all styles and have



Janice Vincak and Cyndi Girgis of Hilton House.

an excellent inventory of high end items such as Waterford crystal Tiffany lamps and Royal Worcester china. We have assisted television production companies select furniture for set design. Everyone should stop by at least once to see what we have in stock,” says Girgis.

Stopping by often is a good idea, as inventory changes rapidly. Any furnishing imaginable for your home may be found at Hilton House, including heavy furniture

items such as beds, sofas and dressers, to mirrors, lamps, art work, china, crystal, cutlery and silverware. Holiday shoppers will enjoy the variety of gift ideas. A delightful array of miniature furnishings for children’s dollhouses will be treasured by a daughter. Men’s leather jackets, cuff links and belts in new condition are available. A selection of fine jewelry features white gold and yellow gold pieces, in addition to attractive costume jewelry. “We carry the best selection of estate jewelry in the Bay Area,” asserts Girgis.

“We are a green store. We reuse packing paper and bags that were manufactured from recycled material. We are all about recycling, since our philosophy is to transfer items that some people no longer have a use for into a new use for another individual. That is my definition of recycling,” she smiles.

An Orinda resident for 35 years, Girgis is married to Magdy Girgis. The couple has two adult children, Tiffany and Zach, both Miramonte High School graduates. For her recent birthday, Girgis and her family enjoyed a trip to Disneyland. On any night you are likely to find Girgis at La Piazza after seeing a movie at the Orinda Theatre.

A longtime member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, Hilton House is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information, visit the website at www.hiltonhousedesigns.com or telephone 254-1113.

Elizabeth Rae Walker, MA, MBA, MFT

After 18 years in practice at a Rockridge location, marriage and family therapist Elizabeth Rae Walker relocated her office to 23 Altarinda Road, Suite 216. She specializes in individuals and couples therapy.

While Walker sees a variety of individuals, an area of focus is depression and anxiety, as well as couples who have been together for a long time and are finding that they have grown apart. “I help people work at deepening their intimacy and the depth of their relationship. I also see new couples who are trying to decide if they want to go to the next stage of their relationship and help them work through that,” she explains.

A graduate of New College in San Francisco, Walker chose this program because it incorporates a progressive view. “You look at who the person is and narrow in on who that person wants to be and help them achieve their goals. The program helps one step out of traditional assumptions about

people,” she explains. An additional area of focus for Walker involves working with individuals coping with life transitions such as relocation, a child going away to college, the death of a parent or other family member or just generally wanting to reorganize one’s life.

“I have had clients who say they are not happy and recognize that they are at a crossroads and need to make changes in their life. I assist them in defining goals and then coach them how to go about achieving them. Another life transition challenge may involve an individual who wants advancement at work and does not understand why they are not achieving their career goals.”

Walker points out the negative impact of technology on human intimacy needs. “So often today people are building relationships through the Internet, either by email or text messages, and in reality our Internet communication is more a reflection of ourselves than about interpersonal relationship. We see people having a relationship with what they imagine the other person to be, rather than with who the other person really is in reality,” she explains.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Elizabeth Walker offers counseling for a variety of issues.

Elizabeth Rae Walker, MFT California license number 31203, is member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Call 510-325-6060 for more information or email at elizabethraewalker@sbcglobal.net.

In addition to Monday through Friday, convenient Saturday hours are available.

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