



THE ORINDA NEWS

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12 Issues Annually
November 2023

Bill Waterman – Citizen of the Year

■ John Fazel is 2023 Volunteer of the Year

By ANDREA MADISON
Staff Writer
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Bill Waterman has been involved in the community for more than two decades, as a board member of The Orinda Association (OA) since 2000, serving as its president from 2013 to 2016 and again in 2021, co-chairing the 4th of July Parade for four years and as a long-time co-chairman

of the Annual Orinda Classic Car Show. Still, he was “pretty shocked” when he was named Orinda Citizen of the Year (COY). “I’m honored to receive the award,” said Waterman.

The COY award dates back to the late 1940s and anyone can nominate a current Orinda resident who meets the requirements. The recipient is selected by a subcommittee of the Orinda Community Foundation (OCF), which works alongside various community partners to promote citizen engagement and community spirit, [SEE WATERMAN page 5]



JEFF HEYMAN

The Orinda Association board member, **Bill Waterman**, was named 2023 Citizen of the Year. During his 20-plus years of community involvement, he has lent a hand to the city’s 4th of July parade and Classic Car Show and is a current member of the Orinda Rotary Club and the city’s Historical Landmark Committee.

International Film Festival Returns to the Orinda Theatre Nov. 9

By ALISON BURNS
Staff Writer
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The Orinda Theatre’s annual California International Film Festival (CAIFF) kicks off Nov. 9 with a sweetly nuanced French movie, *Driving Madeleine*, which begins with an impatient cab driver honking his horn while his 92-year old passenger makes her way, too slowly in his opinion,

toward his car. He is, after all, parked slap bang in the middle of a pedestrian crosswalk.

Madeleine has been advised to move to a nursing home, but first she wants to make one final tour around her old neighborhood. What follows is a poignant journey for both the nonagenarian and her cab driver as she relives her teenage years in Nazi-occupied Paris. Meanwhile we, the audience, are [SEE FILM page 5]



COURTESY OF COHEN MEDIA GROUP

Two of France’s favorite actors, **Line Renaud** and **Dany Boon**, open Orinda’s California International Film Festival with a subtle intergenerational movie, *Driving Madeleine*, which is just one of the 29 remarkable movies presented by the Orinda Theatre from Nov. 9 to Nov. 16.

Property Owners Seek Dialogue About MOFD Firebreak Ordinance

By CAMERON SULLIVAN
Staff Writer
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The Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) recently passed Ordinance 23-08, adopted a month after its introduction, which repeals a similar law from February, leaving some property owners confused about the change and upset that it was approved so quickly without more time for community input.

“I don’t disagree that it was a rapid process,” said MOFD Chief Winnacker. “But the new ordinance was in response to a threat of litigation over which we had no control.”

The complaint about the February ordinance questioned the district’s fuel break

size extension to 100 feet on properties of more than an acre and in areas of natural wildlife habitat. In 2022, the fuel break size requirement was 30 feet.

The August 2 threat of litigation came from North Orinda property owner Anita Pearson and her daughter, Sandy. In a complaint to MOFD through their attorneys, the Pearsons claimed MOFD did not procedurally comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or show the ordinance to be exempt from CEQA before adopting it in February.

The new ordinance doesn’t address the Pearsons’ objection to the 100-foot fuel break size. “Our primary objection to the ordinances is that people are required to devastate natural areas for no fire protection

[SEE MOFD page 6]

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COMMUNITY EVENT

The Art of Mixology

Professional and amateur bartenders alike shook, stirred and swirled their unique creations in the 10th Annual "Art of Mixology" competition for the coveted title of 2023's "Mixologist of the Year." Adventurous imbibers tasted 15 hand-crafted cocktails at the Oct. 14 fundraiser in Theatre Square. The event was attended by 275 people and netted \$15,000 to benefit the Lamorinda Arts Council.



Casa Orinda's **Cynthia Songco** won the "Audience Favorite" for her bourbon-based "Snow Way It's Fall Already" which pays homage to the restaurant's founder, **Jack Snow**. Songco was a returning champion, having won the top Mixologist prize in 2022.



Cheerful attendees lifted a glass to celebrate the luscious libations and the spirited good times had by all at the event.



Maxwell Freise of Wildseed in San Francisco was named "Mixologist of the Year" for his "Tripping to Manhattan," a savory twist on the traditional Manhattan. Pictured to the right of Freise is **Raven Cervantez**.



Third place winner, "Super Sun" from bartender **Bells Hellman** at the Bardo Lounge in Oakland, combined tequila and citrus flavors to evoke a summertime feel.



Second place winner, **Giuseppe Alagna** from Benvenuti in Walnut Creek, shakes it up with his "Sympathy for Nature," a vodka concoction featuring basil and sugar snap peas.

PHOTOS BY JEFF HEYMAN

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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the President
OA Welcomes Two New Board Members

SALLY HOGARTY
sally@orindaassociation.org



As we move into November and prepare for the holidays, which come fast and furious following Halloween, we at The Orinda Association (OA) are thankful for the incredible volunteer spirit here in Orinda.

So many residents came forward to drive our seniors to various appointments and made such a difference in their lives, while enriching their own through the new friendships they've made.

We also saw record numbers sign up for the 4th of July celebrations and the Classic Car Show in September. Both events add to the fun and camaraderie of our community and wouldn't be possible without our wonderful volunteers.

Speaking of volunteers, two residents are stepping up to serve on The OA Board – Kathy Cordova, Executive Editor of *The Orinda News* and Lisa Burlini, a highly

sought-after tech consultant.

Cordova said the ambiance at The Orinda Association office became her impetus to get involved with the non-profit.

“When I first moved to Orinda and started driving for Seniors Around Town, I loved walking into the OA office. Every single time whoever was working that day would look up from whatever they were doing and give me a hearty greeting and a giant smile. They were so friendly and they always made my day,” Cordova said.

“Since I took the helm at *The Orinda News* in January, I've learned so much about everything The OA does, from organizing fun community events like the 4th of July parade and the Car Show, to helping our elderly residents remain independent with the Seniors Around Town program

[SEE MESSAGE page 4]

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to:

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

OFFICERS

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Vice President - Kelly Sopak
Secretary - Eloise Sotelo
Treasurer - Cindy Powell
City Council Liaison - Latika Malkani

BOARD MEMBERS

Carlos Baltodano
Barb Brawner
Jacalyn Buettner
Lisa Burlini
Kathy Cordova
Alex Drexel
Chris Laszcz-Davis
Grace Paik
Bill Waterman
Kate Wiley



The Orinda Association
26 Orinda Way (Library Plaza)
P.O. Box 97
Orinda, CA 94563
Phone: 925.254.0800
www.OrindaAssociation.org

All officers and board members volunteer their time.

Community Service



RODGER MORRIS

At the conclusion of the Lamorinda Idol 2023 Finals, **Boy Scout Troop 237** helped take down one of the light towers reminiscent of the iconic Iwo Jima photo.



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CARTOON / STUDENTS



Sixth Grader Plays Friedrich in Global Tour of *The Sound of Music*

By ADELIE REINER
Staff Writer
adeliejala@gmail.com

At just 11-years-old, sixth-grader Keenan Moran stepped onto the stage of Lamorinda Idol, preparing to unleash his remarkable vocal talent. While many kids his age are involved in the typical pursuits of sports, school and spending time with friends, Moran has soared above the ordinary. He clinched the title of Lamorinda Idol and soon after landed the role of Friedrich von Trapp in the Broadway Global Tour of *The Sound of Music*.



KELSEY EDWARDS

Lamorinda Idol champion and film and stage actor **Keenan Moran** prepares to travel to 14 cities throughout China, where he will play Friedrich von Trapp in Broadway's Global Tour of *The Sound of Music*.

From an early age, Moran knew he wanted to be a film and stage actor. His first performance was with the Performing Academy's production of *Peter Pan*.

"I had a lot of interests when I was really young, but when I was about five-years-old, I really loved musical theater. Recently I started doing film and TV auditions," said Moran.

For the past few years Moran has been involved in many live shows, but he shot his first feature film last year, *No Address*, which is set to hit theaters spring 2024.

Moran's dedication to the arts is starting to pay off.

He won the Lamorinda Idol grades 3-5 solo category in 2020, where 44 singers auditioned and only 11 were selected as finalists.

"Keenan's performance of *Middle of a Moment* stood out as he was able to channel his considerable acting skills, enabling him to fully express the emotion of the song,"


said Steve Harwood, Lamorinda Idol chair for the past 16 years.

However, Moran's proudest accomplishment to date is booking a role in the Broadway Global Tour of *The Sound of Music*. He spent the past summer with the Broadway Artists Alliance in New York City, after auditioning among thousands of kids for a coveted spot in the program.

Not only did he acquire valuable industry exposure, but it was there that he obtained an audition for *The Sound of Music*, where he landed the role as Friedrich von Trapp.

The pre-teen will spend the next six months performing eight shows a week while travel-

[SEE MORAN page 5]



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◆ MESSAGE from page 3

and, of course, publishing our local paper," said Cordova.

She enjoys getting to know the many residents who spend countless hours making Orinda an extraordinary place in which to live. She includes The OA Board of Directors in this group.

"The spirit of giving back is so fundamental to our city," she said. "The more I learned, the more I wanted to be a part of this group of smart, generous, fun people and to contribute more of my time and energy to all they do."

A 34-year resident of Orinda, Burlini has enjoyed working as a consultant with The Orinda Association for many years, assisting with technology, marketing and

more. Her energy and creative ideas have enhanced the 4th of July celebration, Classic Car Show and much more.

"When I started working with The OA, I was so impressed by the large group of devoted, dedicated volunteers who show up year after year, donating their talents to help make Orinda the special place it is. I look forward to serving on the Board and helping in any way I can," said Burlini.

The OA Board is thrilled to welcome Burlini and Cordova to the team, as it sadly bids farewell to Marianne Moser. She served as secretary and was co-chair for the 4th of July celebration two years ago. Career responsibilities have made it difficult for her to donate her time right now. We wish her well and look forward to welcoming her back to the board in the future. ■

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CONTINUATIONS

◆ WATERMAN from page 1

and in consultation with current COY recipient.

“The tradition is important,” said OCF President Richard Westin. He believes the Citizen of the Year award is the highest honor an Orinda resident can receive. This year there were close to 10 Orindans considered for the title, which is more than usual.

Waterman grew up in Orinda, attending Sleepy Hollow, Pine Grove and Miramonte High Schools before venturing north to the University of Oregon and earning B.S. and J.D. degrees. He moved back to his hometown in 1988 with his wife, Marie Waterman, also a fixture of the Orinda volunteer community.

Bill worked as a high school teacher and a civil trial attorney for over 40 years. In 2016 he transitioned to working part-time as a mediator in the courts and also works privately to settle civil cases. During the past four years, he has taught at John F. Kennedy Law School, part of the National University online program.

A lifelong hiker and backpacker, Bill has long supported environmental causes. “I’ve been interested in our physical environment since I was a kid growing up, starting in Boy Scouts and, later, going on Sierra Club hikes,” he said.

A few years ago, he and some friends completed the 200-plus mile John Muir Trail in the Sierra Nevada range over about 10 years of weekends and trips.

“We have this natural green space around

us and these reservoirs and everything, so it’s a beautiful natural environment to be part of,” said Bill. “Life is stressful, getting out and getting outside, walking ... whether it’s East Bay parks or wherever you can, it’s good for the body and mind.”

Bill and Marie are devoted to their rescue terrier George. Marie volunteers with Hospice East Bay and takes George, a certified therapy dog, to visit patients with dementia.

Volunteer of the Year John Fazel

Volunteer of the Year, John Fazel, has been active in the community for many years. A former real estate agent, he is best known for his knowledge of land use provisions in our area. He is the founder of Orinda RoadRunners running club. He also introduced the pancake breakfast into the

4th of July celebration.

Fazel orchestrated the Three-Quarter Century Club luncheon honoring Orinda citizens 75 years and older. Funded by donations from local businesses, the club usually brings together over 100 Orindans.

Fazel is now working with our schools to launch a California Mission Discovery Trail. He is also a member of the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club. See page 7 to read about Fazel’s longtime marriage to Mary Lou.

Waterman and Fazel will be honored at the OCF presentation dinner on Sunday, Nov. 5 at the Founder’s Auditorium, Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. The event begins at 6 p.m. and reservations are required at \$75 per person. Visit orinda-foundation.org for more information and to purchase tickets. ■

◆ FILM from page 1

right there in the cab with them, cruising through leafy Parisian boulevards, immersing ourselves in French culture, as Madeleine’s disturbing past slowly unfolds.

France is not the only country featured in the theater’s two-week festival. Efi Lubliner, its director of programming, and his committee of two, Jo Alice Canterbury and Lucyna Boyle, have also delivered carefully curated gems from Germany, Israel, Poland, the UK, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Belgium, Iceland, the United States and Czechia, about half of which are Bay Area premières.

Derek Zemrak, founder and president of the festival for the past 25 years, has lovingly restored the theater since taking over in 2010. As well as the annual event, Zemrak presents the monthly International Film Showcase, which has become more relevant to East Bay moviegoers since the February closure of Berkeley’s 90-year old art deco movie palace.

Zemrak and Lubliner have two wonderful weeks planned: comedies, dramas,

documentaries, biographies, horror, adventure and shorts. Some of the movies are new and some are old favorites. There are also double features, like the documentary *Sean Connery vs. James Bond* alongside the 1965 drama, *The Hill*, in which Connery gives one of his best performances.

General admission is \$13, while that ageless family favorite, *E.T.*, is free. A regular pass for the entire festival, excluding opening and closing films can be had for \$160. The Early Bird Pass, for everything beginning before 5 p.m., is \$100 – a savings of more than \$200 compared to watching them all individually.

The All-Access Supporter Pass (a bargain at \$250) allows you to watch every movie from *Driving Madeleine to An Cailín Ciúin (The Quiet Girl)* on Nov. 16, the first Irish-language film to be nominated for an Academy Award. Being an honored CAIFF guest at their closing night reception is included.

Along with Lubliner’s eclectic movie selection, the festival includes Zoom appearances from various overseas directors, ready to interact with the Orinda audience, and a *Grease* singalong, which Zemrak

promises to make an annual treat.

One stunning short film Zemrak is proud to showcase is the animated *War is Over*, inspired by John Lennon and directed by local resident and Oscar nominee, Dave Mullins, who will also be opening the festival.

The Orinda Theatre has had a checkered history since it opened in Dec. 1941, almost three weeks after the Pearl Harbor attacks. Eventually falling out of favor as multiplexes took over, it was described in 1983 as an “an ugly monolithic mausoleum... with no aesthetic value whatsoever” by its new owner, who planned to tear it down.

To his surprise, however, he found he was no match for the Friends of the Orinda Theatre and their 22,000-signature petition. Forty years on, Zemrak continues to breathe new life into Orinda’s favorite landmark. ■

◆ MORAN from page 4

ing to 14 cities throughout China.

“I’m most looking forward to getting to know the cast and really connecting with them, seeing how they act on stage and traveling to really cool places I’ve never been to,” said Moran.

Performing for Broadway as a middle school student comes with challenges. Moran has to prioritize school on top of his rigorous show schedule, but he continues to be positive.

“Luckily there’s seven Von Trapp kids,

so there will be other students on the tour with me to do school work with. It is really exciting for me, but I know it’s going to be a big sacrifice,” he said.

His parents, Brendan and Renee DeWeese Moran, plan to switch out, so one can be with Keenan and the other with their two younger children.

Despite the sacrifices, the Moran family could not pass on this opportunity of a lifetime.

“I really just have a flood of emotions,” said Keenan. “It will be such a fun experience that I will remember forever.” ■

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR / POLICE

Letter to the Editor

Measure R Spending Priorities

I have been following the management of the Measure R funds by the SSTOC since its inception in March 2021. I was quoted in September's article in *The Orinda News* on Measure R spending: "we were led to believe the funds would primarily be used for wildfire prevention." Copies of the ads selling the tax can be seen at www.safer-orinda.info/orinda-downplays-wildfire-prevention.

The article states, the SSTOC was directed to focus on wildfire prevention, which would normally mean following a plan generated by a wildfire prevention expert. Orinda had none, so the SSTOC recommended to the council that the city use the UC Center for Catastrophic Risk Management (CCRM), including Orinda resident Dr. John Radke, to create the plan.

However, the city staff, which had no

expertise in the subject, advised the council the CCRM plan was pure research, claimed that the plan required significant public participation to generate results and said the city had other priorities. The council suspended action based on staff's apprehension.

Staff was wrong on two of three counts. The CCRM analysis employed modeling tools which have been in use since 2006 and other tested methodologies. Public participation in identifying vegetation on their properties to enhance the accuracy of the analysis was desirable, but not crucial (the SSTOC thought such participation would be welcomed by the public). But the staff was correct in stating that it had other priorities.

I look forward to future *Orinda News* articles detailing spending on those "other" priorities.

— Steve Cohn

◆ MOFD from page 1

benefit," said Sandy Pearson.

The substantive change to the February ordinance, said Winnacker, was the addition of "two minor amendments" which more clearly explain the CEQA exemption.

The first excludes parcels from fuel break requirements that aren't in or adjacent to a community at risk or that do not include, nor are adjacent, to a habitable structure.

"The second change is that separated plantings of non-irrigated brush may now be retained. In this way the ordinance is less restrictive," said Winnacker, who added this is "not a new concept" but a "minor tweaking, primarily administratively, in response to the threat of litigation."

Eight pages longer than the February iteration, the update outlines wildfire risk factors in the district and explains the CEQA exemption. The environmental concerns section states fuel break requirements "shall not impact any environmental resources or hazardous or critical concerns where previously mapped." It stresses avoiding "the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species; significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters; and the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees."

Winnacker said dead, dying or diseased trees must be removed, but "there's nothing requiring the removal of healthy and mature trees."

The ordinance also states that multiple contiguous affected parcels, owned by the same person, may be treated as a single parcel upon request.

Many residents seek more detail about what can stay and what must be removed. Miller requested more attention to other

aspects including the removal of unirrigated plants.

"We want to make our community fire safe, but we have to balance concerns such as the very minimal water resources and the fact that removing unirrigated vegetation from hills can lead to landslides," she said.

Orinda resident Barbara Leitner, a plant ecologist and environmental consultant, worries residents may clear more vegetation than necessary.

"People want to do the right thing, but we have to discuss risks and tradeoffs," she said.

According to Leitner, removing too much vegetation can cause the spread of invasive species like French broom and invasive weeds can be introduced or spread by human activity.

"Seeds can cling directly to equipment or workers' clothing or may be incorporated into soil carried from site to site on tires, equipment and footwear," she said.

Sandy Pearson said, "home hardening and defensible space around structures is more important than fuel breaks; that's what most other jurisdictions start with." She referred to the Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership of Marin County as an example.

On a case-by-case basis, Orinda property owners may be eligible for exceptions, which MOFD refers to as modifications.

In response to questions from community members, Chief Winnacker pointed to the Resident Guide to Environmental Best Practices on the district's website, which describes several protected species of plants and animals. That guide, along with Annual Abatement Requirements and FAQs, can help residents complete Modification or Extension Request forms.

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Pearson suggested MOFD help property owners understand possible modifications.

"I want them to create a brochure with pictures showing, 'this vegetation is OK and this must be cleared,'" she said.

Pearson, Miller and Leitner called for joint meetings between the Cities of Orinda

and Moraga, the MOFD board and the public to discuss this and other proposed amendments or ordinances.

Winnacker recommends public outreach to increase attendance. He said, "We're happy to hold more meetings to inform the public." ■



POLICE BLOTTER

September 16 through October 15

Calls for Service

- Adult, Missing: 1
- Assault, Simple: 1
- Burglary, Commercial: 1: Moraga Way
- Burglary, Residential: 2: Lucille Way, Daryl Dr.
- Burglary from Motor Vehicle: 1: Barbara Rd.
- Credit Card Fraud: 1
- Death, Non-Criminal: 2
- Failure to Obey Officer: 2
- Grand Theft: 2: Fish Ranch Rd., Don Gabriel Dr.
- Identity Theft: 1
- Outside Assist: 1
- Property Found: 1
- Property Lost: 1

- Robbery, Armed: 1: Country Club Plaza
- Shoplifting: 1: Camino Sobrante
- Terrorist Threats: 1
- Trespassing: 1
- Vandalism: 3
- Vehicle Theft: 3: El Nido Ranch Dr., Bates Blvd., Orinda Way

Arrests

- Drugs, Possession of Paraphernalia: 1
- DUI, Misdemeanor: 1
- Recovered Stolen Vehicle: 2
- Warrant Arrest: 4

— Compiled by David Dierks
Assistant Editor

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MARRIED 50+ YEARS / FILM

The Fazels: A Student Union Date Leads to 62 Years of Adventures

By AMY MOELLERING
Staff Writer
ajmoellering@gmail.com

When John Fazel crossed the Iowa State student union in 1958 on a blind date, he was meeting the girl Gamma Phi seniors claimed was “the sharpest pledge at rush.” John scanned the balcony for a girl who looked like she was waiting for someone.

When he found a candidate, he asked her name: “Maybe the girl says yes, maybe she doesn’t, based on what she sees,” said John.

Fortunately, Mary Lou said yes. “These were Coke dates,” explained John. “The boys wore chinos, a crew neck sweater and Converse shoes so beat up, you used tape to hold them together. It was considered cool. We’d meet the girl and buy her a Coca Cola.”

A friendship began that day, but it couldn’t become more because John, a senior, was betrothed to his high school sweetheart.

It wasn’t until John graduated and started a pharmaceutical sales career that he realized he missed Mary Lou more than the other girl. “She’d become my best friend,” said John. They began a long-distance rela-

tionship with John traveling from Omaha to Ames as she finished her degree in home economics. If she’d had her way, it would have been in veterinary medicine.

“Girls weren’t allowed to study that back then. I spent hours caring for horses and had to change in the union because the sorority didn’t like me to come back smelling like the barn!”

They were married Sept. 29, 1961, in Mary Lou’s hometown of Cedar Rapids, the same day University of Iowa played a Big 10 rival. There was a lack of men in the pews because many had gone to the game or were listening to it on radios in the parking lot, only to show up later for the reception.

“I distinctly remember Mary Lou’s wedding dress, which she made herself,” said John. “She’s very talented or as they would say back then, ‘she cooks, she sews, she makes her own clothes.’”


The newlyweds settled in Omaha, but promotions relocated them to Kansas City, and in 1970, to San Francisco where, with their four-year-old son KC, they bought a dilapidated fixer-upper in Orinda.

“The place was a mess, but we could [SEE FAZEL page 11]




JEFF HEYMAN

Celebrating their 62nd wedding anniversary this year, **Mary Lou** and **John Fazel** began their story in Iowa and have spent 53 years in Orinda.

 **THE REEL LESS TRAVELED**
Where Do I Even Start...

TOM WESTLAKE
poppinjay@earthlink.net



This is one of those months where the term “slow news” definitely does not apply. From Nov. 9 -16, Orinda will be immersed in The California Independent Film Festival. The schedule is so packed with the memorable and noteworthy, it is impossible to detail everything, so I’ll highlight the events which stand out, starting with opening night’s *Driving Madeleine*.

It’s important not to let the title put you off. There are major differences between *Madeleine* and *Miss Daisy*. There is very little Southern gentility, it takes place in Paris and does not sugar-coat anything.

Madeleine was not sheltered by privilege. She led a storied life with no punches pulled, especially when it came to the treatment of women. Nevertheless, there is still much poignancy and laughter to be had, not to mention the always cinematic

city of Paris itself. Other deserving entries are the documentaries. Among them are *Beyond the Visible – Hilda Af Klint* about the first woman abstract artist, *Pianoforte*, featuring young pianists during the annual International Chopin Piano Competition, *Turn Every Page – The Adventures of Robert Caro and Robert Gottlieb*, detailing the sometimes-embattled friendship between author and editor and the compelling *The Caviar Connection* about the corruption and hypocrisy in some foreign governments.

Other genres include *Afire*, a German romantic dramedy, *Il Boemo*, an Amadeus-like biography of Josef Mysliveček and *Godland*, a stunningly beautiful Icelandic drama about a priest wanting to establish a church in a harsh, unforgiving location.

[SEE REEL page 13]



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Photo's courtesy of Aljandra Gomez

At a young age, sports are commonly perceived as positive, extracurricular activities for young kids' mental health. They enable children to develop teamwork and goal-setting skills and foster lasting friendships. However, at the high school level, student athletes notice fewer benefits.

The prevalence of mental illness is a concerning issue for high school students. In 2021, according to the Centers of Disease and Control Prevention (CDC), 42% of high school students felt persistently sad or hopeless and 29% experienced poor mental health.

Also in 2021, more than 1 in 5 considered attempting suicide and 1 in 10 attempted suicide.

These stark figures are attributed to a wide variety of causes, such as social pressure and academic stress, but we must remember a vital contributor: sports. While sports can provide mental health benefits including social interaction and happiness when attaining goals, student athletes face challenges which are often overlooked.

Demanding schedules can include two practices a day, making it hard for students to complete homework while prioritizing sleep. Student athletes are also at risk of overtraining and injury, especially in sports with repetitive motions, such as cross country and track and field.

Addison Byrne, a Miramonte senior, was misdiagnosed with an infrapatellar fat pad impingement, when the fat pad at the knee becomes pinched, only to later find out she had runner's knee, a common overuse injury.

"It was a week before the championships and I was really disappointed because I had a good chance of doing really well in that meet," said Byrne.

Along with injuries, fear of failure and

self-pressure are common causes of stress in athletes.

"In club swimming there is a lot of pressure by the coaches to always compete at 100%, which creates a negative atmosphere on the team where people bring each other down or cheat to get ahead," said Sophie Lederle, a senior at Campolindo.

Club sports are year round commitments rarely providing athletes with breaks or recovery time for physical and mental well-being. They can easily lead to burn-out and cause kids to quit club sports entirely, especially when paired with school sports.

Lederle, who quit club swimming earlier this year, found swimming for her school was more rewarding.

"Swimming for high school is a lot better for mental health because of the team community; everybody helps each other and there is less pressure to be the best," said Lederle.

In comparison to club sports, high school sports contain more team activities and often possess a more lighthearted atmosphere.

But there are still ways to excel in sports while prioritizing mental well-being.



Asher Patel, a senior at Miramonte and Aruban national record holder in the 1500m, started running as an outlet for his mental health.

"I run every day, but sometimes it's not the best outlet because it's so repetitive, so I'll go on a bike ride or go for a walk," he said.

Addressing the mental health challenges faced by student athletes requires the involvement of coaches, parents and the athletes themselves. Taking breaks to regenerate and engaging in alternative physical activities are crucial for athletes.

"There's a notion that we always have to be pushing 100% or else we won't improve," said Lederle. "But this isn't true and can be really negative." ■

Teen Tunes Spotify Playlist

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YOUNG FILMMAKERS

Miramonte High School Filmmakers Spotlight Asian-Owned Businesses

By CHARLEEN EARLEY
Editor-in-Chief
editor@theorindanews.com

Miramonte students are doing amazing things these days, especially two young filmmakers, storytellers and good friends, Nicole Guo and Jarret Zundel, both seniors at the school.

In conjunction with their 30-member production team, the duo created three shorts through their non-profit, Stories From Our Roots, which showcased at the Orinda Theatre in September.

Their films are about Asian-owned businesses, titled Beyond Soybeans, Jumping into Water and Lotus Roots and are less than 14-minutes long. Zundel talked about how he and Guo were inspired to start their non-profit.

Zundel, who was born in San Francisco said, "Nicole and I go to Chinatown often, and each time we have meaningful conversations with the business owners. We realized there are so many human stories behind Asian-owned businesses - about the owners' immigration, struggles, successes and everything in between."

Guo was born in Walnut Creek and raised in Lamorinda. Her mom and dad, Hui Cheng Guo and Jinghua Guo, immigrated from China.

Producing these films has a personal meaning to her.

"As someone born and raised in the Bay Area, we rarely learn about the stories of Asian immigrants, who make up a large percentage of California's residents," said Guo. "I think the Bay Area's diversity is what makes it such a special place. At first, we were just high schoolers talking to business owners because we were interested in their journeys from their backgrounds."

Zundel is equally passionate about

producing these films. He spent his childhood listening to his Waipo's (maternal grandmother) stories of immigrating to San Francisco from Guangdong and working as a ticket vendor at a Chinese movie theater.

"Yet to those who knew her, she was so much more than a ticket vendor," said Zundel. "Like many other immigrants coming from China, she first settled in Chinatown. From the outside perspective, it's a place to get Chinese goods, however, I think in order to keep these communities alive, it is crucial we push for them to be seen as more than sources of goods and services. When people care about a community for its intrinsic value, they will support it economically, and that's why Asian storytelling is so important to me."

It's also important to their entire production team.

"While we have many members in our organization, those who constitute our main team include seniors Olivia Lee and Jenny Zhao, video editors, junior Emma Wong, video editor and publicity director, and Cindy Xie, Chinese-English translator and recent high school graduate who was born and raised and now lives in China," said Guo.

Jennet Zundel, Jarret's mom, is proud of her son and the team.

"Jarret felt he could better capture their [Asian business owners] inspirational thoughts through this medium rather than through just his own writing," said Jennet. "When I saw the way he and Nicole spoke on camera for the first time, I was floored by their poise and passion they had for these Asian businesses. Jarret is so fortunate to have made the acquaintance of so many people with stories that are not often told to a wider audience."

Guo's father is equally proud.

"Nicole and Jarret have accomplished



At the Orinda Theatre on Sept. 7, (L-R) Jarret Zundel, Nicole Guo, Olivia Lee, Hoang Ho, Joan Yao, Antong Cao, and Jenny Zhao, gathered on stage after showcasing their three short films which celebrate and highlight Asian-owned businesses.

something truly remarkable, and we feel an overwhelming sense of pride for them," said Jinghua. "We are incredibly proud of both of them for creating compelling film projects that shed light on the experiences of Asian immigrants who started businesses

in America."

Lotus Roots is about Hoang Ho, a single mother and Vietnamese immigrant who founded Kibi's Café, in Theatre Square. It won second place in the 2023 Student

[SEE FILMMAKERS page 13]

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STUDENTS

Miramonte Senior Sells Spoons to Fundraise for Zambian Nature Conservancy

By NATASHA KAYE
Staff Writer

natashakaye@berkeley.edu

Miramonte senior Tara Dao's passion for artistry and community leadership took center stage at the annual Lafayette Art & Wine Festival in September. Dao, alongside her sister Chelsea Dao, manned a pop-up booth selling beautiful handmade wooden spoons, unassuming and simple in nature, to raise funds for Zambia's Mukungule Community Nature Conservancy.

The Hand Carved Wooden Spoons Project is a collaborative effort of local Zambians, community leaders fighting for change and a family in Orinda, who have made giving back a pillar of their livelihoods.

With their mother, Chivy Sok, having

worked in the international activism field for almost 30 years, the Dao sisters have grown up with social justice leaders from around the globe regularly gracing their homes for dinners and meetings.

In 2018, the family welcomed Hammerskjöld "Hammer" Simwinda, a renowned Zambian activist and pioneer of conservation efforts, who piqued Tara's interest in supporting conservation work in his country.

"Throughout the night, I was hearing stories about the work they're doing, and a couple of years later, my mom showed me a picture of the wooden spoons they'd been making," said Tara. "When I saw them my immediate reaction, after hearing they were selling for only a one dollar equivalent was, 'Oh, I could probably sell them for \$15 or \$30 here.'"

She got to work, reaching out to Simwinda to establish a line of communication, becoming the Bay Area contact for the Conservancy. As Zambia's first community-led nature conservancy, it has several local arts-based fundraising initiatives to support itself, including the sale of these spoons.

Tara arranged for the villagers to send a shipment of the spoons, and upon arrival, realized there was an issue. The spoons, which are hand-carved from wooden logs



(L-R) Wooden Spoon Project founders and sisters, Chelsea Dao and Tara Dao, display their spoons alongside satisfied customer, Nicole Carberry, at the Lafayette Art and Wine festival held in September. CHIVY SOK

arrived in a rather raw state, with splinters and other small imperfections.

Determined to sell a smooth, beautiful and profitable product, the family spent countless hours sanding and polishing the spoons with coconut oil so they would be ready for sale.

Tara explained why they spent significant time perfecting the spoons.

"I think art is such a major part of a community and of a culture and I want to be a part of, you know, encouraging art and encouraging that craftsmanship, to develop in this community and ours too," she said.

Fortunately for Tara, the annual Lafayette Art & Wine Festival was the perfect opportunity to begin selling the spoons and to combine her passion for community art in both the Bay Area and from the Zambian villagers.

The Dao's set-up their booth through the Girls Crushing It Pop-Up program, a non-profit organization which provides entrepreneurial experiences for young girls to boost their skills and confidence in the business world.

They pitched the wooden spoons project to the organization's founder, Roxanne Christophe, of Orinda, who loved the idea and helped the girls set-up the tent where the Dao sisters raised \$300.

"I want to see this as something that will continue to expand," said Tara. "My goal is to bring this initiative online so we can have a greater audience outreach and hopefully continue to raise money to support this cause."

For more information about the project, visit www.mukunguleconservancy.weebly.com. ■

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Pet of the Month



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"My 12-year-old son **Damon Iverson's** pet, named **Blue**, is a brave budgie, who gets free-range flying privileges," said **Brandyn Iverson**. "He and his two Samoyed dog housemates (**Fuego**, pictured here) play this fun game for hours. Wish him luck! Friends, not food!"

◆ FAZEL from page 7

afford it," said Mary Lou, of the home they've lived in for 53 years and have renovated several times.

Since John traveled for his job, Mary Lou built roots for the family, which now included daughter Andrea. "We found community through the schools," she said. KC was in the last class at the old Orinda school, now the library, and then went to Wagner Ranch which is now the community center. Mary Lou worked at Wagner Ranch, Sleepy Hollow and the district office.

"Those years were tough because I was flying so much," said John. "It wasn't until I stopped my sales career that life really began," referring to the many ways he became involved in the community, pursued his love of endurance running and embarked on RV adventures with Mary Lou. They have explored Canada, Alaska and crossed the United States six times.

Mary Lou's love of horses and dogs (they showed Schnauzers) has also been a big part of their lives. Together, with friends, they built the pull barn on Bear Creek Road, which is still standing near the PG&E substation. For 16 years, Mary Lou volunteered for Access Adventures, a non-profit organization which provides carriage rides for the disabled.

By volunteering them as Parents Club Presidents in 1979, Mary Lou started John's involvement in the community. Since then, John has served in many capacities and was recently awarded 2023 Volunteer of the Year by the Orinda Community Foundation.

What's the secret to a good marriage? Mary Lou claims it's patience.

"We were also lucky to have good kids." John insists friendship is key to a happy marriage. "If you're fortunate to marry your best friend, the chances of that marriage succeeding increases exponentially." ■

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Live At the Orinda! Concert Series Features Dynamic Jazz Duo Nov. 5

By SALLY HOGARTY
Staff Writer
sallyhogarty@gmail.com

Audiences are in for a treat Nov. 5 when two of New York’s most popular young nightclub entertainers, Nicolas King and Seth Sikes, appear at the Live At the Orinda! concert series.

Tunes from the *Great American Songbook* and tributes to Sammy Davis Jr., Anthony Newley, Liza Minnelli, Judy Garland, Ethel Merman and Barbra Streisand will ring out as the powerhouse duet brings their *New Belters* show to the Orinda Theatre.

“It’s a celebration of all the people who shaped us and made us into the entertainers we are,” said King.

An award-winning artist who has been singing tunes since he was 4-years-old, King had several Broadway hits under his belt before his twelfth birthday, including *Beauty and the Beast* and *A Thousand Clowns* opposite Tom Selleck. He went on to star in several children’s television shows and numerous commercials before going on the road for 10 years with his mentor, Liza Minnelli, as her opening act.

Hailed as “the best male singer of his generation” by *Theatre Scene*, Sikes won numerous awards for his tributes to Garland, Minnelli and Bernadette Peters, while consistently selling out venues since his 2014 debut.

Off stage, he has been associate director for the multiple Tony-award winning musical *The Band’s Visit*, for *The Nance*, and as director for the original musical *Bunked!*

While together for less than a year, these talented entertainers have an impressive following, traveling all over the country

performing to enthusiastic audiences.

“We both had very busy solo careers and had heard of one another, and were amazed our paths had never crossed,” said Sikes. “Nicolas is the big jazz singer protegee of Liza Minnelli, one of the great singers I pay tribute to in my solo act. When I finally met Nicolas, I asked him to be a guest on my show at 54 Below in New York. We soon realized we have the same love of old music and decided to do a show together.”

According to King, the show was supposed to be a “one-off,” but offers kept coming in and now, a year later, they are still performing together while keeping their busy solo careers.

“We’ve become best friends,” said King. “It’s great traveling together because we’re on the same time clock. We both hate mornings and love night times.”

The duo found their strengths and weaknesses complement each other with one audience member remarking, “It was like watching one person wash and the other dry.”

Both agree they bring out the best in one another.

“We have zero percent competition between us and are excited to work with one another,” King said. “It makes us want to do our best. You want to hit that note, do better. It’s just fun. Kind of like toddlers in the sandbox. And, I like how Seth has no inhibition on stage and how he gets me to come out of my shell a lot more.”

For his part, Sikes credits King with being more musical and helping him in that area.

“I’m the goofier one, the clown,” said Sikes. “Parodies are my specialty.”

For tickets to the Nov. 5 Live At the Orinda! Concert, which begins at 5 p.m., visit <https://www.orindamovies.com/events/>. ■



Home is where the heart is, and this Thanksgiving, I am grateful for the opportunity to help you find yours. Wishing you a warm and wonderful holiday surrounded by the people and places you love. If your dreams include a new home, I am here to make them come true.
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Seth Sikes and Nicolas King headline the Nov. 5 Live At the Orinda! concert series. Continuing busy solo careers, the award-winning singers have also hit the right note with audiences as a duo turning a one-time performance into a series of popular concerts.

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Oh, The Places You'll Go!



COURTESY OF KATHY ENZERINK
 Strolling along the Malecon in Puerto Vallarta, our Copy Editor, **Kathy Enzerink**, takes a much-needed break from the colorful shops and street vendors with *The Orinda News* in front of the iconic seahorse.

◆ FILMMAKERS from page 9

World Impact Film Festival, in the Social Issue category. Visit (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2lZvoGzIGk>)

Jinghua said the stories told in the films have resonated deeply with the Asian community and touched the hearts of Lamorinda residents and beyond.

“It’s truly a testament to these high schoolers’ talent, dedication and the impact they’ve had on others through their work,” he said. “We will continue to support and encourage them on their journey, knowing they have the potential to make even more

◆ REEL from page 7

A *Quiet Girl*, chosen by Jo Alice Canterbury and Efi Lubliner as part of their International Film Showcase, will also be showing. These are but a small sampling of what is in store during the festival.

Other features include a tribute to Maurice Chevalier and a special showing of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Visit www.caiff.org for more information on special guests, contests and pricing.

The Chiller Diller Theatre presents *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* Nov. 18 at 8:30 p.m. The most charitable thing to be said about this movie is that, thanks to modern technology, you will be spared the clumsy looking man-in-suit and poor puppetry action.

This is definitely an updated version from the earlier Toho Studios attempts. Not only Godzilla shows up, but also Mothra, Rodan and Ghidorah join in. They even got Millie Bobby Brown from *Stranger Things* to star, so join Lord Blood-Rah for the mass destruction.

Lots to look forward to in November. Keep checking www.orindamovies.com for additional news, and remember to always veer towards those wonderful images made from sound and light for that’s where the reel magic lies. ■

significant contributions in the future.”

Guo, Zundel and their team hope these films shed light on inclusivity as well.

“It’s integral that we are intentional in our efforts to make this community a home for Asian immigrants. Whether that means providing culturally sensitive food options, Cantonese-language schools or diverse representation in our media, we, as a society, can support our marginalized communities in a myriad of ways,” said Zundel.

Guo adds, “For me, inclusivity allows our community to learn more about the stories that often go untold. I learned these stories can often be the most fascinating and ones I learn the most from.”

Follow and visit *Stories From Our Roots* on Instagram @storiesfromourroots, online at www.storiesfromourroots.org and subscribe to their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@storiesfromourroots>. ■

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VISUAL ARTS

Orinda Library Gallery: It's the Men's Turn Now

By CHARLEEN EARLEY
Editor-in-Chief
editor@theorindanews.com

Historically, the Lamorinda Arts Council has hosted more than half a dozen exhibits – solely by female artists. It's the men's turn now, with their November showcase at the Orinda Library Gallery titled, "Four Men and a Gallery."

From Nov. 4 to Dec. 1, enjoy paintings by Orinda artist Lance Jackson, El Sobrante artist David Lew, Bill Russell of San Rafael and ceramics by David Shapiro of Moraga.

Their reception to meet the artists is Saturday, Nov. 18, 3-5 p.m.

Jackson's exciting news is he has a piece in the 2023 de Young Open in San Francisco. With 7,766 entries submitted in a two-week entry period, 883 artworks from Bay Area artists were chosen and are on display until Jan. 7. View more of his paintings at www.lancejackson.net.

Lew showcases his large, acrylic painting titled, *Freedom of Abstraction*.

"It's a lyrical process in which I rarely preconceive an outcome," he said. "I often try to avoid an overly controlled static image by allowing colors to flow and clash until my intention is realized."

He said the textures and colors formed by intentionally exposed strata of pigments, "create a visual effect of this fluid movement throughout the picture plane – which I hope will invite viewers to participate in this process – to enjoy this freedom also."

Russell is a multi-disciplinary artist, whose decades-long work includes fine art, illustration, teaching and web design.

His work is expressive, mid-century modern paintings on wood, using compositions of black and gold shapes.

"I'm inspired by jazz music and its improvisational nature," said Russell. "My work is about relationships and about the dynamic conversation between shapes ... flat or painterly, abstract and representational."

Visit his work at www.billrussellfineart.com and his writings at www.illustrated-journalism.com.

Don't go home until you see David Shapiro's ceramics, who by day, is a Moraga City Councilmember. A serious pottery enthusiast, he creates from his home garage/pottery studio.

For more information about the Lamorinda Arts Council call 925.359.9940 or visit www.lamorindaarts.org. ■



Orinda resident, **Lance Jackson's** *Orinda Parade* 20" x 16" painting. One of his pieces is on display at 2023 de Young Open until Jan. 7, 2024.

Orinda Books Features Artist Lisa Gunn

By CHARLEEN EARLEY
Editor-in-Chief
editor@theorindanews.com



Artist **Lisa Gunn** titled this piece, *Wild Rose and Lemons*. It's a 10" x 10" oil on canvas, painted with brush and palette knife. Her artwork is on display this month through Nov. 30 at Orinda Books.

An Orinda resident for 38 years, Lisa Gunn is excited to showcase her mix of still life and landscape paintings at Orinda Books through Nov. 30.

One could call her *The November Gal*, for a very good reason.

"Orinda Books showcases a different artist each month, but luckily I have been gifted with November each year," said Gunn, who moved here from Washington, D.C. with her husband after their first child was born in 1985.

[SEE GUNN page 15]

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Kent Fickett with grandson Rowan Chen

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FIREWISE / CLASSIFIEDS

FIREWISE

The Lesson of the Red-Roofed Home

MELANIE LIGHT
melanie@melanielight.com



By now, nearly everyone has seen and heard about the red-roofed home in Lahaina which survived the Maui wildfire unscathed, while all the neighboring homes were reduced to ashes. Lahaina wasn't prepared with enough fire trucks or water to battle the fast-moving fire, resulting in devastating consequences.

The story behind the miracle survival is a simple and lucky one. In an effort to keep termites out of their home, owners Dora and Trip Millikin installed a metal roof and removed plants lining exterior walls. Accidentally, they hardened their home against wildfire.



MELANIE LIGHT

This Orinda resident has hardened her home by installing ember-resistant vents and laid non-combustible material around her house. If the roof is a Class A fire resistant type, she can rest easy.

Although there is no way to know for sure if the home-hardening actions alone saved the wooden house, it did not ignite.

The biggest threat to homes during a wildfire are embers blowing ahead of the blaze. Embers can ignite flammable roofs or vegetation and quickly grow into large fires. Hopefully homeowners have evacuated and firefighters are on the frontline, which means no one is available to put out an ember-related fire.

The City and Moraga Orinda Fire Department (MOFD) have been urging residents to harden their homes against wildfire. The most common pre-citation issued by MOFD inspectors is to homeowners who have not removed all combustible ground cover within two feet of their homes and/or structures.

CalFire has a great web page with ways to prepare at: www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/hardening-your-home/.

In addition to replacing asphalt roofs with metal and removing vegetation, installing ember-resistant vents and gutter guards are excellent ways to improve the fire re-

[SEE FIREWISE page 17]

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Unwanted Eye Glasses are collected for Lions Club at The Orinda Association office, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda.

◆ GUNN from page 14

Her love for painting began early in life.

"I always wanted to paint and took high school art classes," she said. "Studying painting was on the back burner through undergraduate and graduate school and throughout my life, until I became an empty nester."

Gunn is represented by Paul Mahder Gallery in Healdsburg, where her large abstracts and beach paintings are sold. The Orinda Books' gallery features her "small moments captured."

Gunn, a classical pianist, received her Master of Music Performance degree from the University of Massachusetts and has taught classical piano for 48 years.

Her musical side coincides graciously with her artistic side, which can be seen in her paintings. She often refers to herself as, "a classically trained musician who paints and an artist who sings."

"I use my understanding of music to formulate color, composition and articulation," she said. "Different techniques are used according to the composition I am painting. Sometimes they are quiet, like the beach painting, and many times are energized with great saturation of color. I do not want my paintings to be stiff with realistic detail, but rather loose and reflecting movement."

Gunn said as her journey to paint took shape, she realized music and painting were similar.

"Compositional techniques in classical music bear the same principles of unity in color and in theme. Notes and passages can be played cold and warm," she said. "Articulation of notes and phrases are much like brush strokes, evoking different feelings, as well as paint application creating many different effects. Different touches on the piano can sound in the

distance echoing colder, more distant colors like the mountains in plein air painting."

Gunn said all forms of art and music "are a pure form of communication allowing each of us to reach inside and find who we are. It is the most honest and unscathed form of expression in life. It is like a child who is not yet taught to inhibit what their persona is."

What Gunn loves most about painting and music is the "realization that both art forms must breathe light and release from tension," she said. "Everything must travel to something and nothing really ends until the finale. The fact that you can say so little and so much."

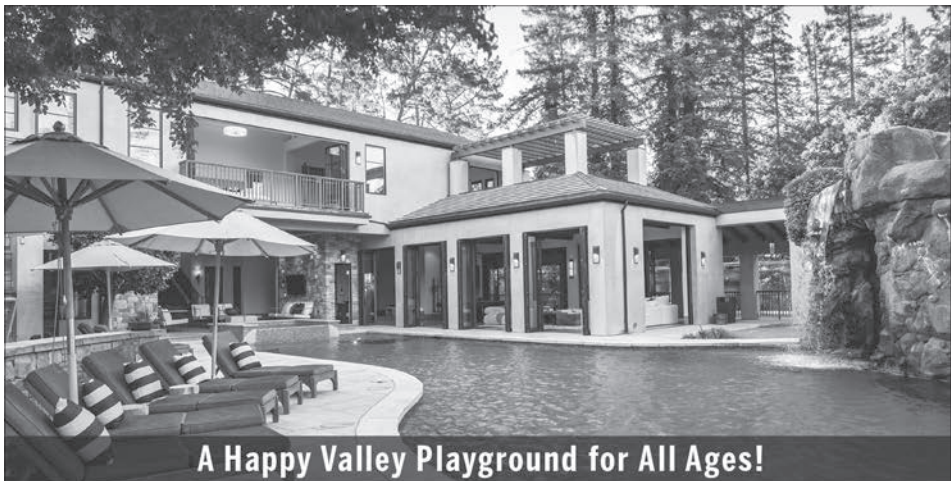
When it comes to mottos in life, Gunn said she has two she strongly believes in. "One is 'it is not about being perfect, but getting better' and 'PASS IT ON,'" she said.

Orinda Books is located at 276 Village Square. Open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Call 925.254.7606 and email info@orindabooks.com. ■

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CALENDAR / CAR TIME

On the Calendar in November

- 1 **Orinda Rotary's** Annual chicken dinner fundraiser with Casa Orinda. Go to <https://orindarotaryfundraiser.com> to order dinner by Nov. 11 to be picked up on Nov. 14. **Orinda Books Gallery** featuring Lisa Gunn's mix of still life and landscape paintings at Orinda Books through Nov. 30. See article p. 14.
- 2 **Orinda Books Pat's Book Group** will read and discuss *The Heart of It All* by Christian Keifer. 11:30 a.m. **Miramonte High School** presents Stephen Gregg's *Trap* playing 7 p.m., Nov. 4 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets at showtix4u.com.
- 3 **Miramonte High School** home football game versus Las Lomas High School, junior

- varsity at 4:30 and varsity at 7 p.m. **American Assoc. University Women - Orinda Moraga Lafayette Branch** Annual Fundraiser, Mingle and Jingle, at the Moraga Art Gallery, 5 p.m. - \$75 per person benefiting Stem Conference, local scholarships and other community outreach projects.
- 4 **Orinda Farmers' Market**, 9 a.m. Orinda Way in front of Rite Aid and the Community Center Park. Visit www.cccfm.org or 925.431.8361. Also Nov. 11, 18, and 25. See article p. 19. **Lamorinda Arts Council** presents Four Men and A Gallery in the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, Artist reception Nov. 18, 3 p.m. See article p. 14.

- 5 **Orinda Community Foundation** hosts Orinda Citizen and Volunteer Dinner, 6 p.m. Founder's Auditorium, Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. \$75 per person. For reservations email orindafoundation@gmail.com. **Live at the Orinda!** presents Nicholas King and Seth Sikes. For tickets visit www.orindamovies.com. See article p. 12.
- 9 **Saint Mary's College** Dia de los Muertos Celebración before the men's basketball game. www.stmarys-ca.edu/events/dia-de-los-muertos-celebracion. 5 p.m. **California International Film Festival (CAIFF)** Orinda Theatre. www.caiff.org. Runs through Nov. 16. See article p. 1.
- 11 **Orinda Books** presents Robert Cahn, co-author of *Grace in All Simplicity: Beauty, Truth, and Wonder on the Path to the Higgs Boson and New Laws of Nature*. Written by physicists Cahn and Chris Quigg. RSVP at <https://bit.ly/3tBn93m>. **Saint Mary's College**, Veteran's Day panel with veterans in business, 11 a.m. www.stmarys-ca.edu/events/service-leadership.
- 14 **Orinda Academy** virtual information

- session, 7 p.m.
- 15 **Orinda Library Toddler Storytime**, songs and rhymes for 1 to 3 year olds and their caregivers. 10:30 a.m., repeats at 11 a.m. Due to Fire Marshal restrictions on the room, tickets will be given out at 10:30 a.m. Also, Nov. 22 and 29.
- 17 **Montelindo Garden Club** presents Master Gardener Holly Sauer on Happy, Healthy Houseplants, 9 a.m. See montelindogarden.com/meetings. Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. Free.
- Orinda Woman's Club** 37th annual Festival of Trees, 10 a.m. at the San Ramon Marriott. <https://orindawomansclub.org> for more information.
- Orinda Parks and Rec.** Introduction to Wreath Making, 1 p.m. Orinda Community Center, Room 6. Register at <https://bit.ly/3M5B8oy>.
- 18 **Chiller Diller Theatre** presents *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* 8:30 p.m. See article p. 7.

Send calendar items to Jill Gelster at calendar@aspenconsult.net.




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CAR TIME

American Car Brands: Made in America?

XAVIER ESTRADA
xavier.estrada.freelance@gmail.com



A study to determine which vehicle brands and models are "Made in America" was conducted by www.coms.com for 2023.

The parameters of the study include where the vehicle was assembled, parts content, country of origin for the engine and transmission and U.S. manufacturing workforce. The list is confined to the criteria of light-duty vehicles sold en masse to the public, exempting those weighing more than 8,500 pounds, production models with less than 1,000 units and other marks highlighted on their website.

Topping the charts is Tesla, with its four models ranking 1-4. After that, none of the Big Three American brands, Ford, GM and Stellanti (formerly Fiat Chrysler) made the top 15. It may not come as a surprise to learn Japanese brands, including Honda and Toyota, are more American made than the top American brands.

Globalization reshaped the automotive industry decades ago.

Older generations often associated "Buy American" as a way of directly supporting the U.S. economy, but in many cases, it was false.

For example, since the 1980s, Honda has been manufacturing vehicles, including the transmission and engine, in the United


States. Many German automakers, including Mercedes and BMW, followed suit in the 1990s.

For 2023, the highest-rated American-made, midsize pick-up truck is the Honda Ridgeline at 7th with the Toyota Tundra ranking 12th in the full-size pick-up truck category. Of the top 20, nine spots belong to Honda and Acura, two go to Toyota and one each to Volkswagen, Lincoln and Chevrolet.

Electrical vehicles (EVs) will reshape this list over time.

Just as Tesla ranked at the top of the American-made vehicles list, others may soon creep higher on the charts. Volkswagen's ID.4, in the 6th spot, is the only other EV in the top 20. Originally made in Germany, manufacturing was moved to its Tennessee plant.



Due to the criteria set when the study was done, many EVs were exempted including Rivian, Mercedes, Hummer EV, Lucid and more. Since EVs are less intricate than internal combustion engine vehicles, manufacturing the powertrain should be an easier process with fewer parts to worry about. Some brands are either planning or already underway to retool, expand or construct new facilities to build their EV line-ups. ■



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MARK BELL
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As the Autumn winds slip through the back gate to Miramonte’s football field, they bring a slight chill and a beautiful, subtle, shimmer to the new blades of synthetic grass now adorning the playing surface.

It’s beautiful and state-of-the art, with better cushioning, superior drainage and much lower upkeep costs.

Underneath, a geological historian might say, the ground has been impacted by a multitude of past events. Layers upon layers of seismic sports occurrences over the years.

Back-to-back National Championship Sports (NCS).

California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) championship wins for Miramonte in ‘72 and ‘73.

The huge 1981 State Championship win. The last time our JV team beat Campo in 2015.

The Redemption Tour.
 Pete Stehr’s 1,693-yard season.
 My son’s first game.
 Coach Payo’s last game.

It all happened somewhere under that new playing surface.

A more recent layer, which brings a smile to my face just thinking about it, is the Moraga Orinda Lafayette (MOL) flag football championship exhibition games, played at halftime under the Friday night lights.

You can’t watch those little grade schoolers without joy in your heart. The boys hit the field wide-eyed and ready for their NFL contracts. Heck, if they were puppies, they just might pee in excitement. Clearly they have caught Flag Football Fever.

And, watch out, it is contagious.

Look no further than this year’s launch, and success, of the Diablo Athletic League (DAL) Girls Flag Football League. Seven on seven, three 40-minute games every Wednesday evening, against two other local school teams. Look for my photographs of their games posted on the Miramonte High School Instagram pages.

Our new girls flag football team coach, Jennifer Lezcano, spoke briefly about her new team and upsurge in the sport.

“I think having teams with all four Acalanes schools will help generate interest at the middle and elementary level and the sport will continue to blossom,” she said.

And at the typing of this article, it looks like Coach Lezcano is going to lead with standout freshman athlete Sophia Blore as starting QB, and juniors Jessica Chambers, Julia Quinn-Ferguson, Mariana Lawrence, Chance Newby, Magnolia Rebmann and senior Mary Zarate as Blore’s go-to “A” team.

Most all agree flag football is the safer future, and still exciting to watch. Girl and boy leagues are said to be scripted out for the growth of the NFL, to continue their global expansion plans.

Flag football is even slotted to be in the 2028 Olympics. Yep, the floodgates are open.

So if you were lucky enough to have caught one of Miramonte girls’ games before the season ended Oct. 28, you were watching our young women make history.

Flag football is here to stay at Miramonte. It is, no doubt, the next layer of frosting atop our field’s deep sports history cake. The winds of change have arrived, enjoy the breeze. ■



MARK BELL

The Diablo Athletic League’s newly formed high school girls flag football league is definitely catching on. Thanks in part to the fact that no one seems to be catching athletes like Miramonte Running Back **Jessica Chambers**, seen here evading would-be flag pullers from the Campolinda defense.

◆ **FIRWISE** from page 15

sistance of a house. MOFD has a number of programs, including a Home Hardening Grant to help with gutter guards and ember resistant vents. Visit www.mofd.org/our-district/fuels-mitigation-fire-prevention/home-hardening-grant-program.

MOFD hands out bushfire mesh to line vents and offers a reimbursement grant, of up to \$1,000 per parcel, toward the purchase of ember-resistant vents. They provided free gutter guards to 182 residents in Moraga and Orinda recently and may be

able to do more.

After several years of encouraging wild-fire abatement activities, it’s clear it will take time before all, or even most, Orindans take action to make their homes wildfire-resistant and be fire-code compliant.

The City and MOFD believe wildfire is a real threat and have created opportunities for residents to keep their properties safe from wildfires. The red-roofed Maui home is a great lesson and incentive to follow recommended home-hardening practices to save yourself and your home. ■



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SPORTS

Saint Mary's David and Goliath Basketball Success Story Continues

By KEN HOGARTY
Contributing Writer
kenhogarty@gmail.com

Saint Mary's College (SMC), the alma mater of myself and what the school's alumni office estimates as 400 Orindans, tips off its men's basketball schedule Nov. 6 in Moraga. These Gaels have secured a preseason "top 25" national ranking.

In both 2022 and 2023, Orinda's neighboring college with among the five smallest undergraduate enrollments of 350+ D-1 [top tier] hoops programs, earned a five-seed [top 20 teams] during March

Madness. Both years, the Gaels won first-round match-ups but didn't advance further, losing to four-seeds UCLA and UConn respectively.

Bad draws? The Gaels vanquished another 2023 five-seed, San Diego State, 68-61, last December, yet the Aztecs advanced to play UConn for the NCAA championship, falling to UConn by a bigger margin than SMC two weeks before.

The Gaels had led the eventual national champion Huskies into the second half, even after losing best shooter Alex Ducas to an early injury.

During the last 22 years with Coach



KEN HOGARTY
Ken Hogarty's wife, **Sally Hogarty**, former executive editor of *The Orinda News* and Saint Mary's College administrator, celebrates the Gaels' 2019 WCC Tourney victory over Gonzaga back on campus with Aussie **Tanner Krebs**. Oy! Oy! Oy!

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Randy Bennett, abetted by an Australian player pipeline including NBA stalwarts Patty Mills, Matthew Dellavedova and Jock Landale, the Gaels have gone 507-208. They have been to nine National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and seven National Invitational Tournaments. Not bad for Lamorinda's tiny D-1 school.

Though not making long NCAA tourney runs like fellow West Coast Conference (WCC) rival Gonzaga, the Gaels have beaten the WCC behemoth 10 times since 2009. ESPN correspondent, Jay Bilas, rates the Gaels/Zags rivalry among the five best nationally.

As a 1950's San Francisco youth, I marveled when my dad took me to see Bill Russell's University of San Francisco (USF) Dons play at Kezar Pavilion. USF ran off a 60-game winning streak and claimed two

national championships.

Subsequently, my Gael-love blossomed when a neighbor took me and his son across the Bay to the same Slip Madigan Gym where I would lead taunting cheers my senior year aimed at famous future UNLV coach Jerry Tarkanian.

My favorite Gael as a youth was Tom Meschery, later a Warrior legend who would become the first foreign-born (in China, of Russian ancestry) NBA all-star.

Meschery's 1959 Gaels advanced to the Elite Eight, but lost to Cal, which then triumphed over Oscar Robertson and Jerry West teams to claim the NCAA Championship.

Though the WCC afterward featured great players such as Bill Cartwright, Steve Nash and John Stockton, the Gaels

[SEE BASKETBALL page 19]



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SEASONED SHOPPER



BARBARA KOBSAR
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Apples vary in flavor, from sweet to spicy to tart, and all should be crisp, crunchy and juicy. Left on trees to fully mature, or are subjected to less-than-ideal storage conditions, apples can become mealy and dry.

Of the 2500 apple varieties grown in the United States, only 15 or 20 are commercially significant. Harvest generally begins in August and by November we find some of the best eating and cooking apples of the season.

Fuji apples are bursting with sweet, juicy flavor. Generally large to extra-large, they are a fall favorite. They store and travel well due to their dense crisp interior.

Braeburns are moderately tart and identified by some large patches of red-pink blush and striping over a yellow-green base. The bold flavors are reminiscent of older classic apple varieties. Originating from New Zealand in the 1950s as a chance seedling, Braeburns were one of the first bi-colored varieties.

Cripps Pink, more commonly known as Pink Lady apples, can't be missed with their beautiful coloring and almost perfectly round shape. The white flesh is slow to brown when cut, making it "the" apple to use in salads or on a charcuterie board.

Granny Smith is my choice for pie making. Medium to large in size makes for less peeling. The other green-skinned apple to look for is Pippin, which is also excellent for baking.

Apples are the quintessential fruit of fall. Pick your favorites to use in this delicious recipe for apple crisp.

Apple Crisp

- ½ cup each of old-fashioned rolled oats, flour and brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon each of cinnamon and baking powder
- ½ cup butter, cut into small pieces
- 4 Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced ¼ inch thick
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon each cinnamon and nutmeg

Combine oats, flour, brown sugar, cinnamon and baking powder in a medium size bowl. Add butter and cut in with a pastry blender. In a small bowl stir together melted butter, flour, juice, milk, vanilla,

◆ **BASKETBALL** from page 18

often spent the '70s to '90s as conference afterthoughts.

Out of this often-bleak basketball wilderness, two fascinating Gaels emerged in the 1990s.

"Big Continent" Brad Millard, 7'3" and 345 pounds, helped muscle the Gaels to a 1997 March Madness invite. They lost to Wake Forest and eventual NBA Hall-of-Famer Tim Duncan.

That same era's Hershil Gilmore has since changed his name to today's more recognizable Mahershala Ali, an award-winning actor.

In 2001, the Gaels changed acts when Bennett took the helm after a 2-27 season.

This century's Gael success reverberates most personally: SMC won a TOTAL of 17 games during my 1967 to 1970 undergrad years.

Fewer than 20-plus wins THIS SEASON

will disappoint Gael fans, inspired by last season's freshman prodigy, Campolindo High School alum Aidan Mahaney. An ESPN article calls Mahaney the "face of the WCC," Gonzaga blue chippers notwithstanding.

Newcomers, including a top-ranked point guard, a frontcourt Harvard transfer and Mahaney's fellow Campo grad (coach's son) Cade Bennett, a redshirt last year, will augment Gael stalwarts during the coming campaign.

They will join Ducas, Mitchell Saxen, Augustas Marciulionis, himself the son of a Warrior icon, and other proven returnees.

The 2023-24 Gaels will entertain, while further purging my long-dreaded undergraduate basketball memories.

Ken Hogarty is husband to Sally, the former Executive Editor at The Orinda News for 28 years. His first novel, Recruiting Blue Chip Prospects, is launching this month. ■



BARBARA KOBSAR

Visit the J&J Ramos stand at the Orinda Farmers' Market on Orinda Way, where **Paclina Leal** and **Yair Mendoza** can help you pick out the best apples for eating out of hand or baking.

brown sugar and spices. Pour butter mixture over apples in a bowl. Pour and spread all into an 8x8 inch baking dish. Sprinkle crumble mixture over the apples. Bake at 375 degrees for 35 minutes or until golden brown.

The Orinda Farmers' Market is open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Orinda Way in Orinda Village. Visit www.cccfm.org, facebook.com/orindaFarmersMarket and Instagram at [OrindaFarmersMarket](https://instagram.com/OrindaFarmersMarket) or call the market hotline at 925.322.6228. ■



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Seventh Grade Author, Harmony Yu

By KATHY CORDOVA
Executive Editor
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Writing three books in three years is a pretty impressive feat – especially when those three years are a quarter of your life. For Harmony Yu, a seventh grader at Orinda Intermediate School, writing comes naturally, as a way to satisfy her curiosity and express her passion about animals and the environment.

Yu is a voracious reader, especially of non-fiction. According to her mother, her daughter doesn't care much for the typical Netflix or Disney fare popular among her peers. She prefers watching documentaries – mostly about wildlife and nature. So strong is her pull to real stories that Yu said her mom spent a month convincing her to watch *Avatar*.

Harmony's parents – Jane Yu, a graduate student at UC Berkeley School of Education, and Dan Yu, an artificial intelligence

scientist – foster their only child's interests in many ways, including visiting zoos, aquariums and museums wherever they travel.

Read on to learn more about Harmony, her books and her pet bunny.

Where do you get the ideas for your books?

I read a lot and I get ideas from reading. One year I tracked my reading on an app and I read an average of 200 pages per day. The things I read about are fun and then I think I want to write about them and so I do. Sometimes I get ideas when I'm in the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

What motivated you to start writing books?

During COVID I took a fanfiction Wings of Fire (a series of fantasy novels) class online. I was kind of bored with the assigned homework from school, so I decided to do something on my own.



Taking photos of birds in nature is one of author and OIS seventh grader **Harmony Yu's** favorite pastimes. DAN YU

Your first book, *Blizzard in a Rainforest* is about a snow leopard which is a victim of illegal pet trade. How did you learn about this issue?

I was reading about sand cats purchased illegally as pets and I thought people would definitely do that with a snow leopard, because they're so exotic and fluffy.

Your Amazon.com bio says you write "to give people a window into the secret and sometimes very unfair lives of animals." What do you mean by that?

Humans tend to be really egocentric and ignore animals. People act selfishly and that's not good for animals or the ecosystem and it's not good for humans either. Humans depend on the ecosystem to survive.

Who illustrates your books?

I illustrate them myself, with the help of my art teacher, Pang Yen Chou. I've been taking art classes since I was nine.

Can you tell us about your bunny and why you decided on a rabbit as a pet?

His name is Spot. He's very feisty and very smart. He knows his name and he knows when we don't want him to go somewhere. He'll go there anyway, but before he goes, he looks to make sure we're not watching.

I wanted a bunny because I was born in the (Chinese) Year of the Rabbit.

What are the characteristics of someone born in the Year of the Rabbit?

Astrology is so vague that it fits anyone.

Do you know why your parents named you Harmony?

It's similar to my Chinese name, Hanshi. It's also reflective of how they wanted me to be – harmonious and peaceful.

Besides writing, what do you like to do?

I like to read. Sometimes I do arts and crafts. I like to go outside and stand in the backyard for hours taking pictures of birds. In the summer I'm on a swim team.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

For the past few years I've been thinking about being a marine biologist, then I got interested in birds, so now I don't know if it's marine biology or ornithology, maybe marine ornithology.

What role have your parents played in helping you pursue your passions?

Ever since I was little, my mom encouraged me to read a lot. When I started to develop my own interests, my parents supported me, no matter what. Right now, that's taking me on hikes and signing me up for birding events. Also, membership to the Monterey Bay Aquarium and trips to zoos and natural history museums.

Anything you want to add?

People should try to understand nature more.

Thank you to Harmony's neighbors, Albert and Helen Greenberg, who brought her to our attention. If you know someone who lives or works in Orinda who should be featured in Meet Your Neighbor, please email editor@theorindanews.com. ■



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