

# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
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December 2010

## Orindans Brave the Rain to Celebrate Orinda's History



SALLY HOGARTY  
Pierson and Anarose Smith, grandchildren of Dr. Weylin Eng, came to the ceremony prepared.

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

At the City of Orinda's silver anniversary celebration on October 21, former Mayor Aldo Guidotti spoke of how not everyone was in favor of incorporation 25 years ago. "That's why I was elected in 1985 to the first city council," said Guidotti, who had fought against incorporation.

Guidotti and several other former mayors were on hand to wish the city a happy 25th birthday and to see the time capsule buried outside of city hall. Also on hand were State Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner and a representative for Congressman John Garamendi.

City Clerk Michele Olsen worked with numerous community groups and organizations to gather items for the time capsule. A wide variety of proclamations, t-shirts, hats and newspapers were included in the cylinder, which will be opened in 2035.

The event began with a reception and photo display of Orinda's mayors to date. Fittingly, the time capsule dedication

[SEE CAPSULE page 10]



SALLY HOGARTY  
Santa Claus will once again arrive in a fire engine to hear the Christmas lists of young children.

## Hospice Tree Lights the Way Once Again This Holiday Season

By DIANA HAAS  
Contributing Writer

People are eagerly awaiting the Hospice Tree Lighting ceremony at the beautiful old oak tree at Orinda Village Square on Saturday, December 4, at 4:30 p.m.

The festivities begin with school choirs from Del Rey, Orinda Intermediate, Glorieta and Wagner Ranch performing beautiful holiday music followed by the lighting of the old oak tree in front of the Bank of America. Santa Claus will arrive on a Moraga - Orinda Fire Engine with treats for the children and holiday cheer for all.

The magic of the tree lighting is sponsored by Friends of Hospice - Orinda and the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. A tax-deductible contribution of \$20 symbolically lights a bulb on the tree during December and early January. What a wonderful way to begin the holiday season by honoring

the memory of a friend or loved one with a light on the tree.

Proceeds from the tree lighting support Hospice of Contra Costa. Donations can be made at the Tree Lighting or sent to Hospice of the East Bay-Orinda Chapter, 3470 Buskirk Ave., Pleasant Hill, CA, 94523.

### IN THIS ISSUE

News	
Police Blotter	10
Traffic Issues	10
Around Town	
Caldecott Tunnel	5
Holiday Shopping Guide	11-14
Local Residents/Businesses	8, 10, 16, 19
Performing/Visual Arts	2, 9, 1
Schools/Students	8, 20
Between the Lines	15
Business Buzz	24
Calendar	21
Classified	22
Editorial	4
Orinda Association	3
Way to Grow	17

## Tiny Tim is December's "Tiger" of the Month



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Appropriately named **Tiny Tim**, this lovable rascal lives with **Dana, Jeff, Austin** and **Carley Roberts**. He is taking a well-deserved rest from his hunting and gathering duties. While "visions of sugar plums" might not be what Tiny Tim is dreaming about, he certainly seems like one happy guy.

## Downtown Revitalization Workshop Draws Crowds

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

Over 200 people turned out for the first community workshop on the future of downtown Orinda. The City of Orinda sponsored the workshop as a response to a growing number of local residents who are unhappy with the Planning Process Review Task Force's (PPRTF) recommendations to revitalize the downtown area. A second workshop is planned for December 9 at 7 p.m. at the Orinda Community Church Fellowship Hall.

Facilitator Chris Beyon encouraged the audience to think of downtown Orinda as "a clean slate" as he began the October 18 workshop. He set down a list of ground rules to keep the discussion on point and to minimize confrontations as he asked audience members to list Orinda's assets. Although a few in the audience preferred to list their grievances with PPRTF recommendations rather than concentrate on the positive aspects of downtown, the majority of those attending worked with Beyon to compile a long list of what they liked about their town. Next, the group was asked to list challenges to making Orinda a more vibrant retail community. The bisecting of the two downtown sections by BART and Highway 24, difficulty attracting retailers that residents want, feasibility of current retail space for larger sought-after retailers, challenges in upgrading old store fronts, parking, and lack of trust in the city's Planning Department were among the problems mentioned.

Beyon encouraged members of the audience who had not given their comments verbally to fill out comment cards and to take additional comment cards for friends and neighbors. "We want to get as much input as possible," said Beyon. "This first

[SEE DOWNTOWN page 16]

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Holidays!



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LIBRARY GALLERY

# A Conversation Across the Centuries and Tall Ships at the Orinda Library

By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer

The Orinda Library Gallery gears up for something a little different in December – a collaborative project from the group *Kunstanke* (Art Thought in Norwegian) entitled “A Conversation Across the Centuries,” as well as Tall Ship models handcrafted by the late Walt Ulrich. The show runs from December 1-28, but the gallery is closed for the holidays December 22-26. An artists’ reception is planned for Thursday, December 16 from 5 to 7 p.m.; light refreshments will be served.

*Claude Lorrain Project: A Conversation Across the Centuries*, came about when *Kunstanke* members found a discarded book of Lorrain’s sketches and drawings. Claude Lorrain, who lived from 1600-1682, is best known for his painted landscapes, unusual in that in his time, landscapes, especially plein air, were seen as a “lower” art

form. Lorrain became famous by elevating this art form. The group decided to collaborate on taking the original book plates and adding their contemporary artistic responses to them.

The book they found had only sketches and drawings as studies for paintings, thus lending itself to be the “bare bones” for their 21st century “Conversation” with Lorrain’s work. They distributed the plates of the book randomly; sometimes they collaborated on a piece, others were kept to one artist. There were a few rules: the finished piece had to remain the size of the original page (9.5” x 11” – framed 16” x 20”); some part of the original Lorrain image had to be present; and essentially two dimensional. Next, they made some kind of response or change to Lorrain’s drawing - a development in composition, a social comment or a radical transformation. There will be 40 of these in the show; the project took two years to complete. Titles of works shown



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**His Name Shall Be Darwin** is a large mixed media piece that will be displayed at the December show.

include “Bird on a Wire,” “Red Zebra,” and “His Name Shall Be Darwin.”

*Kunstanke* ([www.kunstanke.com](http://www.kunstanke.com)) is a group of women artists who met while taking advanced art classes at Diablo Valley College eight years ago. They are skilled in a variety of mediums including oil paint-

ing, photography, watercolor, sculpture and print making. The members had an affinity for each other because they have all traveled extensively abroad and lived in a variety of places around the country. Ultimately, they wanted mutual support in

[SEE GALLERY page 18]

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# THANK YOU ORINDA!

Many thanks to all the friends and neighbors who put your trust in me on election day. I look forward to continuing our work together to make Orinda the best it can be.

Amy Worth

Paid for by Friends to Elect Amy Worth to the Orinda City Council 2010  
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ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President  
Membership Matters



Mark Roberts

The Orinda News is mailed each month to every address in Orinda. As the president of the Orinda Association, I'm very proud of that fact, and I'm grateful to our terrific editor, writers and, of course, advertisers for making this possible. But I'm also very grateful to a special group of people who support not only the News but all the other projects and programs sponsored and produced by the OA: our members.

While the News is the most frequently and widely distributed product of the OA, the support of our members enables us to do so much more. We staff and operate the Volunteer Center to connect Orinda residents with organizations and causes that need their talents. We coordinate Seniors Around Town, enabling senior residents who may no longer be able to drive themselves to shop, visit the doctor, and stay connected with their community. We recognize outstanding efforts and contributions to the improvement of Orinda through the Volunteer of the Year and William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Awards. (Mark your calendar for Sunday, January 30, for the presentation of the 2010 awards.) We plan, organize and produce most components of Orinda's Fourth of July parade and celebration each year. And through events like candidates forums, we encourage residents to learn more about the candidates and issues that will have an impact upon the future of our community.

OA members make a special investment in that future by supporting the OA's mission and programs to enhance the quality of life in our home town. I truly appreciate our members' participation in our efforts and thank them for taking an active role in making Orinda an even better place in which to live, work, learn, shop and play.

Since many members renew their membership in December before the end of the calendar year, this is the right time for me to thank them for their past and future support. It's also the perfect time for me to ask non-members to join the OA TODAY. The OA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, public benefit

organization so your membership donation is tax-deductible to the extent of the law. (Please consult your tax advisor for more information.) I'm sure that fact won't be your primary reason for joining the OA, but it's nice to know that you enjoy a little reward for your good deed.

Much more important is the fact that you too will be an active participant in and supporter of the OA's efforts to keep Orinda a special place to call home and address needs and changes as they occur. So please take the time NOW to renew your membership or become a new member. Envelopes were inserted in the November issue of the News or you can visit our website, www.orindaassociation.org, to make your investment in Orinda's future. Thank you!

A gift suggestion: Here's a gift idea I want to share with all my fellow Orindans – the gift of civility. I'm as guilty as the next person in sometimes forgetting that courtesy and consideration of others are cornerstones of our civilized society. A harsh word or thoughtless action (or, in some cases, lack of action) may come too easily. It may take a little extra effort (or a little restraint) to think of others first instead of just what we want.

This holiday season, and continuing into the new year, let's remember how good we feel when we think of others first. While Christmas gifts are a tangible expression of thinking of others, let's apply that thinking to our deeds as well. Let's look for opportunities to help other people when they need it. Let's be patient when someone needs a little extra time. Let's think about how we would want to be treated by others when we're having a problem and then treat them the same way.

Some people say civility is disappearing. I say we can bring it back, at least here in Orinda. Let's give ourselves the gift of being nice to each other. I can't think of a better way to make us even happier that we're members of this wonderful community.

Best wishes to all of you and your families for a warm and wonderful holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Nominations Due Soon

Do you know someone who volunteers to make Orinda a better place to live? Or someone who helps the environment?

Nominations for the Orinda Association's Volunteer of the Year and William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental awards are due December 5. A gala awards dinner will take place on January 30 at the Orinda Country Club.

Forms for nominations can be downloaded at the OA website, www.orindaassociation.org or forms can be picked up at the office in the lower level of the Orinda Library. For more information, call 254-0800.



JILL GELSTER  
OA President, Mark Roberts awards Jenny Papka the William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental award at last years OA Awards Dinner.

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to:

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

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26 Orinda Way (Lower Level Library)  
Orinda, California 94563  
Phone: 254-0800 Fax: 254-8312  
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*Merry Christmas*

## Remembering Who's Been Naughty and Nice

As we prepare for the holiday season, we leave behind a number of contentious issues. The October Community Workshop on the future of downtown Orinda saw a large number of local residents weighing in with often differing views of how to make Orinda's retail establishments more vital and self-sustaining. And, the November election for three positions on both the Orinda Union School Board and the Orinda City Council saw Orindans at their best and their worst.

While forums for the above candidates provided valuable information for voters

and participants at the forums asked vital questions, other aspects of the campaign left much to be desired. Voicing one's opinions is certainly an important part of the democratic process, but vandalism and posting derisive personal information on flyers around town oversteps the bounds and will surely result in coal in more than a few stockings this year.

Fortunately, the new year does not include any local elections so, hopefully, tempers will cool and a spirit of cooperation and constructive criticism will prevail.

— Sally Hogarty, Editor

## Letters to the Editor

### Seniors Weigh-in on Downtown Development

The increasing number of letters from Orindans about the proposed "downtown redevelopment" of our town is of great interest; so, we "young 80s seniors" are weighing in with our observations/opinions.

We have resided in the same Orinda house since 1959, where three (now adult) children benefited from the "growing up in Orinda" experience. We have been long-time participants in community affairs, which include Peter's twice running for city council, when incorporation was a major issue.

Mayor McCormick's May 28, 2010 *Orinda News* guest commentary: "Orinda's Downtown Plan and how to pay for it," stating the goals of the Planning Process Review Task Force Revitalization Plan, was very informative and complete. It has stirred up as much interest within our town as experienced when we voted to incorporate.

We submit comments as follows:  
1) Orinda's two business communities differ with in terrain and property development history. Good planning on one side may not be suitable or applicable for the other. More input from business owners is needed in a public discussion. Property owner/landlord identification and comment would be helpful for further illumination.

2) Orinda's business areas are separated by Highway 24. The overpass, with BART station and freeway connection, cut Orinda in half. It could appear to an out-of-town visitor that Moraga Way (going south) represents one town; then the other side, Orinda Way extending to one of major connector to highway routes to the west on Camino Pablo to San Pablo Dam road, another town. The freeway bisects our business community.

3) The Moraga Way/Brookwood Road is an area of concern. What is the status of this small community's health? Adequate parking and access to a favorite merchant (or imaginative new business) is a major

ingredient to consider.

4) On both sides of Orinda increasing building height in specific areas would require major structural changes, including underground parking, elevators for occupancy above two floors. The architectural planning drawings give a good concept, but is there enough consideration of the current business and civic dislocation with major construction required? Is there a real market for condo-housing amidst commercial space in Orinda's suburban community?

More input from business owners and clarification of business property owners is needed. Sensible guidelines for now vacant property, or possible new landlords of current buildings, will encourage development that satisfies and continues Orinda's well-managed history.

— Peter and Elizabeth Muller

### We Won!

Over the past few days, I have received hundreds of calls, letters and email from supporters who are both shocked and distraught over the apparent outcome of the November 2 Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees election. At this writing, there are still 5,000 ballots from the City of Orinda that have yet to be counted.

Regardless of the outcome of the election, to my mind – we have won! The entire purpose of my candidacy was to shed light on the existing practices of the board and the district – from the tradition of giving bonuses to the Superintendent while laying off teachers and taking money from classrooms, to the top-down style of management, to the unwillingness to move the 4 p.m. board meeting time to an evening meeting as is done in most other districts.

The wagon trains circled, and prominent "insiders" demonstrated their willingness to commit libel, *ad hominem* attacks and more in an attempt to maintain the status quo and continue the institution of a "self-perpetuating," hand-selected board. But the genie is out of the bottle – and it is now our responsibility to keep the momentum going and encourage the new board constellation to increase transparency, be responsive to parent, teacher and community opinion,



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		Lamorinda Comforts of Home	12

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The next OUSD board meeting is on Monday, December 6, 2010, 4 p.m., 8

Altarinda Road. See you there!

— Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert

[SEE LETTERS page 16]

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Editor..... Sally Hogarty  
Advertising Representatives..... Jill Gelster, Elana O'Loskey, Marie Waterman  
Editorial Committee..... Mark Roberts, Sally Hogarty, Jim Luini, Bill Reynolds, Kate Wiley  
Staff Writers.....Bobbie Dodson, Valerie Hotz, Jeanette Irving, Steve and Cathy Lambert, Kathryn McCarty, Julie McCormack, Fran Miller, Marian Nielsen, Elana O'Loskey, Mark Roberts, Moya Stone, John Vanek  
Contributing Writers ... Brenda Free, Diana Haas, Megan Miller, Miriam Schaffer  
Graphics..... Aspen Consulting: Jill Gelster & David Dierks  
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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 16, 2010.

CALDECOTT TUNNEL

# Orinda Face of the Third Bore of Caldecott Tunnel

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

Few motorists looking up at the face of the third bore as they enter on the Orinda side would realize that the classic design, which mirrors the other two bores, is a faux painting. When that bore of the tunnel was completed, the building above the entrance was stark white and grey concrete.

James Benney of Paint Craft Associates thought his group of painter friends could provide something better. Benney says, "At first I thought of something jazzy, then it seemed the better idea was to replicate the intricate design of the other entrances. I

approached CalTrans with my plan, offering to do it for free. They accepted. We did the work in 1984. We had a talented group so the columns and design insets look surprisingly real."

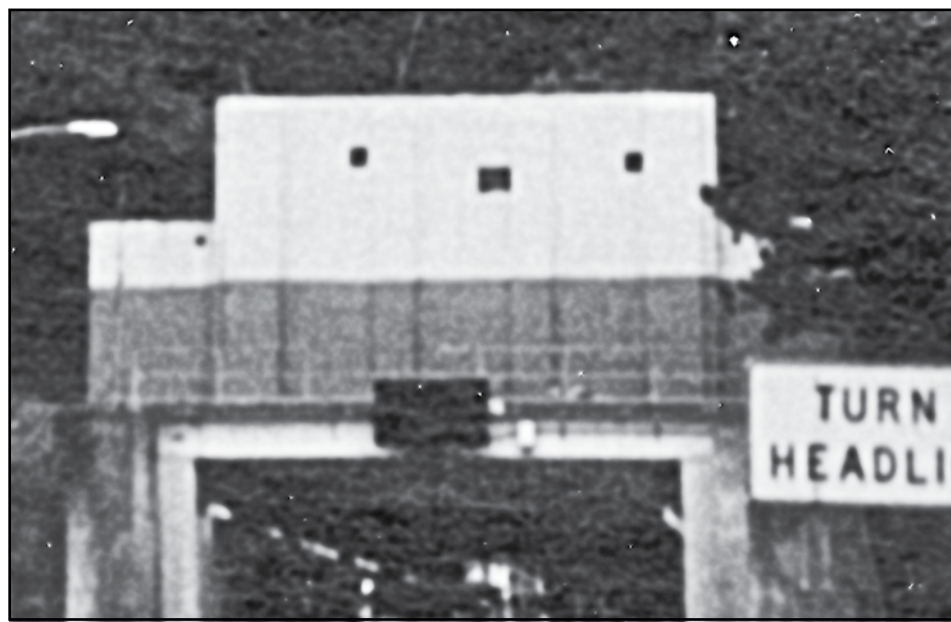
The project took about 12 days, with some 20 painters each doing a shift of several hours, to complete. The Benjamin Moore Paint Company of Walnut Creek provided the paint.

Benney says they have been back to repaint several times, mainly because of graffiti. "Now we would like to do the same for the fourth bore when it's finished and the concrete has cured. We hope our offer of a free paint job will be accepted."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Thanks to volunteer painters, the tunnel's third bore resembles the detailed stone work of the first two bores.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The facade of the Caldecott Tunnel's third bore was just white and gray concrete when first completed.

# Caldecott Tunnel's Fourth Bore Grinds Away

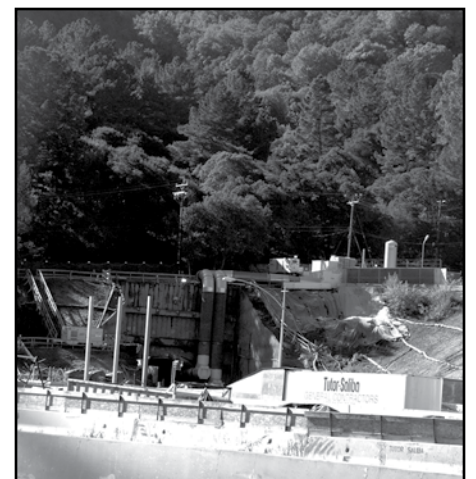
By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

The largest roadheader (tunnel excavator) in the United States, especially built in Germany for the Caldecott Tunnel's fourth bore, is drilling night and day as work progresses on this long-awaited project. While a ground-breaking ceremony was held January 22 of this year, it was August 22 when cheers and applause mixed with the sounds of the grinding and the whirring of the 1,000 volt engine as the long arm of the 120 ton roadheader dug into the east portal wall.

On the first real working day, Caltrans reported that 10 feet had been carved out by midday. The next steps involved installing steel arch shoring and to spray the exposed rock surface with concrete, a process called shotcrete, to stabilize the soil and rock. Then the massive drill, studded with 60 tungsten steel points began on the next section. So it will go, with a smaller machine scheduled to begin drilling from the west end. "After this process is completed in each section, laser surveying is done to make sure the two bores will line up and meet," said Jeff Weiss, spokesman for the Caldecott fourth bore project.

New safety features in the fourth bore include a shoulder, which will allow emergency vehicles to drive through without dodging traffic, and seven escape passages connecting the third and fourth bores. Thus, if one of these bores is blocked, people can walk to the other one to make their way out.

The need for a fourth bore is evident to anyone who has traveled through the tunnel [SEE 4TH BORE page 18]



SALLY HOGARTY

Construction of the fourth bore continues. Shown here from the Orinda side. A temporary sound wall on the Oakland side helps alleviate some of the noise of the drilling equipment.

# Caldecott Tunnel Has a Long and Rich History

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

While today's drivers are looking forward to state of the art lighting in the fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel, those entering earlier versions of the tunnel had a very different experience.

Opened in 1903, the 1,040-foot roadway only had one lane. Travelers had to light rolled up newspapers to signal anyone at the

other end that they were coming through.

Some called it the Broadway Tunnel for the road that accessed it. Others referred to it as the Kennedy Tunnel for the old toll road and the local farm near the west portal. It was located about 220 feet above the current Caldecott Tunnel and 320 feet below the summit. Dark and narrow, it accommodated both horse drawn vehicles and pedestrians.

[SEE HISTORY page 22]

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## PREPARE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Advertorial

## Your Health Data Privacy

By Evan Corstorphine  
Portable CIO

Much has been written about data privacy. Most of what we read is written from the standpoint of protecting your financial information from identity-theft. However financial data is just one aspect of your privacy. Another area concerns your medical information. Who keeps your medical records? How are they protected? Who can access them? What happens if your data is exposed? What happens if your medical identity is stolen?

In 1996, Congress passed the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA. Among other things, the bill ensures Americans can take their health insurance with them when they switch jobs, standardizes transaction codes for the interchangeability of data in the medical industry, and enacts a series of measures to protect your information from being exposed to anyone except those directly involved in your care. These are important and reasonable goals, but it is much easier said than done.

HIPAA has five sections, or "Titles" as they're referred to. The area that concerns security and privacy is under Title II, in the area of Administrative Simplification. Taken by itself, Title II has enormous implications for covered entities (physicians, pharmacies, dentists, chiropractors, insurance companies, and any other entity that deals with your health information). To put it bluntly, the medical

community has done a woefully inadequate job of educating itself and working to comply with either the spirit or the letter of the privacy and security law. Although it's understandable that there will be procrastination when implementing something so sweeping, our physicians must take action, because all of the implementation deadlines have passed. The rules were revised in 2001 and 2002, and the covered entities had until April of 2004 to comply. Most aren't even close.

For the past three years, Portable CIO has been working with the medical community to assist their implementation of electronic health records systems (EHR). A natural extension of working with EHR's is to assist in the audit and remediation of their office processes to become HIPAA compliant. If you are a physician or other covered entity and want to discuss this, please call us to begin this important discussion. With unforgiving financial penalties, nobody can afford to delay compliance.

The next time you visit a physician of any variety, ask them what their plan is to comply with the HIPAA privacy and security laws. Hopefully, your physician will smile broadly, tell you they've been working on their plan, and have everything under control. If they don't, give them our number, as we may be able to help save them a lot of money and headaches.

*For assistance with data privacy issues of all varieties, contact your trusted advisors at Portable CIO, Inc., 925-552-7953 or info@theportablecio.com.*

## Delicious Holiday Meals Without the Clog

By MEGAN MILLER  
Contributing Writer

Thinking of deep-frying your holiday turkey this year? If so, what will you do with the leftover fat and oil remaining in the pan?

The Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group is reminding residents that grease from turkey fryers, along with any other fats, oils and grease should not be disposed of down your kitchen sink or any other drain. Instead, the Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group is asking residents to properly dispose of cooking grease at special collection events (or ongoing disposal locations) taking place throughout the region during the holiday season.

Fats, oils and grease accumulate over time and can lead to clogged pipes and sewer lines, causing back-ups into homes and spills into creeks and the Bay – all messes no one wants. A consortium of wastewater treatment plants in the Bay Area, the Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group seeks to reduce wastewater pollution. "Our goals are to protect Bay water quality and keep the sanitary sewer system flowing smoothly," said Sharon Newton, BAPPG Chair. "Residents can help by not pouring grease and oils down the drain."

The Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group is also going one step further this year. They've teamed up with Orchard Supply Hardware, The Home Depot and numerous independent retailers to place stickers on turkey fryer boxes, encouraging consumers to practice proper disposal methods.

"Deep fried turkeys can be delicious, but this cooking method typically uses at least 5 gallons of oil," said Newton. "And this cooking oil shouldn't be poured down



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group has placed stickers on turkey fryer boxes sold at The Home Depot and Orchard Supply Hardware to remind residents not to pour grease down sinks and drains.

drains." Newton added that this message is especially important during the holiday season. Everything from turkey gravy to Chanukah latkes to Christmas cookies and tamales can be a culprit in the fight against clogged pipes.

Follow these simple step-by-step disposal instructions to keep your drains clear:

- Place drain strainers in kitchen sinks to catch greasy food particles, and scrape leftover greasy food waste into the garbage or compost container, not the garbage disposal.

- Pour cooking oil that is free of water, soap and food scraps into a clean, sealable container. Bring the container to one of the Bay Area drop-off locations.

There are several drop-off locations throughout the Bay Area this fall, and some operate year-round! Check [www.BayWise.org](http://www.BayWise.org) for a list of free sites near you.

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## Coping With Grief During the Holidays

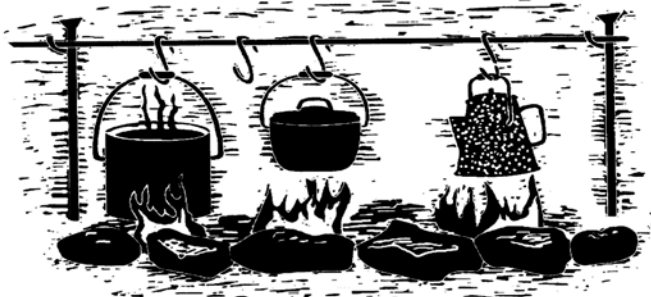
The holiday season - that time from Thanksgiving to New Year's - is a time to give thanks, to rejoice and spread good cheer. For many, however, the holidays can be a time of grief.

Hospice of the East Bay is offering a workshop for people who have experienced the death of a loved one and find the holiday season to be a sad and stressful time of the year. It will be offered at Hospice's administrative offices: 3470 Buskirk Avenue, Pleasant Hill on Wednesday, December 8, from 7 - 9 p.m.

"In our society, so much emphasis is

placed on gifts and glitter that there is an enormous amount of heightened expectation, making it difficult for anyone to admit they hurt," says Lee Ann Morgan, manager of Hospice's Center for Grief and Loss. Our "Coping with the Holidays" workshop provides a forum for people to share concerns and ideas and learn helpful, positive ways to manage holiday grief."

This workshop is offered for a fee and requires pre-registration. The fee is waived for those who cannot afford it. For further information, and/or to register, call: 925-887-5681.



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AUTOMOTIVE

# CAR TIME

Beware of Coupons

by JOHN VANEK



In this economy, it can make sense to take advantage of any discounts that are available to you. This applies to auto repair also. Discounts that are popular now are coupons that you receive in different forms. They come in the mail or in the newspaper. A coupon for a pizza is not exactly the same as a coupon for an oil change.

But if the pizza is lousy, it may not be such a good deal. If you have to go out of your way to get a bargain oil change and experience poor service that may not be such a good deal either. But there really is more to it. It is obvious that coupons are designed to attract business, and there may be nothing wrong with that if the tactics are honorable. However, they are not always morally correct.

There are guidelines set by various consumer agencies, and many coupons are on the fence. For instance, it can be a matter of the "fine print." One common catch phrase is "most cars" or "in most cases." Because the truth of the matter is that there is no way that any oil change shop can do an oil change on all cars for \$29.95 or even \$69.95. The engineers that design modern high tech engines have something in mind when they decide what type of oil should go in the crankcase. For instance, a Honda or Toyota Hybrid uses a low resistance viscosity such as SAE 0-20 for reduced friction. This special oil is much more expensive than oil commonly used. The improper oil in your car can affect engine longevity and can actually void your vehicle's warranty. It is crucial to put the proper kind of oil

in your vehicle. Many European imports require a high volume of synthetic oil. Sometimes the cost of the oil alone may exceed \$120 by itself. Some shops will put the inappropriate oil in your car if you agree. The hidden fee tactic also is used with oil change shops such as "disposal fees, shop fees, and taxes." How many times will a motorist walk out of the oil change shop actually paying the advertised coupon price? Not many.

The antics once you get in the door are not always admirable either. Many shops don't bother to do a proper inspection of your vehicle, because they are giving away their profit on the bargain oil change. Many shops choose the hard sell on services that you really may not need. There is a gaggle on Google when it comes to consumer complaints about bogus oil change shops. Chain stores and department stores have been in the news for selling parts and services that are not required. These illegal antics are still going on to this day. There have been hidden camera sting operations performed by the BAR (Bureau of Automotive Repair) that have proven services were never performed. Undercover agents have marked fluid caps to prove that they were never checked or removed. I would like to think that these kinds of things don't happen in the auto repair industry, but it is very clear that they do.

Smog check coupons are also another good example of advertising illusions. A smog coupon for \$49.95 may also say plus smog certificate, plus a dyno fee. This fee

is for using the company's dynamometer, an engine diagnostic tool, which verifies that the repair was done and that the engine is operating according to specifications. A transaction fee may also be charged. What is a transaction fee anyway? It is another reason to charge you more money. An honest shop will disclose all of the fees up front. When you add up all up the hidden fees, it will usually be fairly close to the normal charge. Sometimes, the inconvenience of going out of your way may not be worth it.

Saving money at what price? It is usually better in the long run to use the facility that you know you can trust. They will save you money by being fair and honest. Inconvenience and frustration is usually not worth it. As usual, be a good consumer. Do the research; understand what kind of oil is going into you engine and know what maintenance is required at what interval. Always think of the big picture.

## Classic Cars Help Historical Society



SALLY HOGARTY

Orinda Motors' John Vanek presents a check for \$3,000 to Lucy Hupp Williams and Teresa Long of the Historical Society with Classic Car Show coordinator Chip Herman (R) offering his congratulations. The check is part of the proceeds from the annual Classic Car Show that also benefited the Orinda Association's Seniors Around Town program, and Campolindo High School's auto shop program.

## Restaurants Recognized by Central Sands



SALLY HOGARTY

Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority recognizes Orinda restaurants that participated in the food recycling pilot program, which converts restaurant food scraps into fuel to power a sewage plant and to add energy to the PG&E grid. Pictures (L-R) 1st row: Jason (Orinda Country Club), Chih-Chung Fang (Republic of Cake), Ora and Jennifer (Siam Orchid), and Carlos Rangel (Shelby's). (L-R) 2nd row: Paul Morsen and Bart Carr of Central Sands, City Councilmembers Steve Glazer and Victoria Smith. Other restaurants that participated in the program but are not pictured include: Geppetto's Cafe, Hananzen, Hsaing's Mandarin Cuisine, La Cocina, and Petra Cafe.



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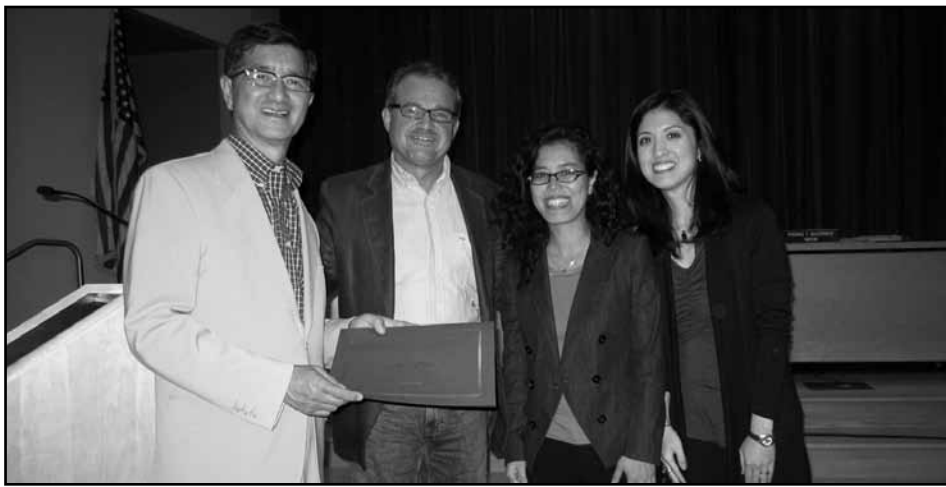


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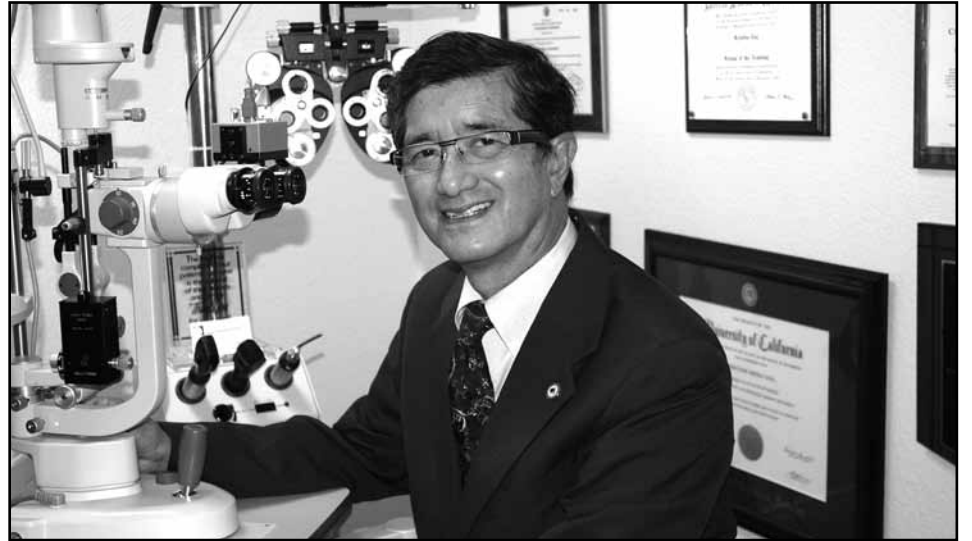
POETRY WINNERS / WEYLIN ENG



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Dr. Weylin Eng** (L) received a proclamation from **Mayor Tom McCormick** recognizing the Orinda Optometry Group's 25th anniversary. With Eng is his daughter **Dr. Kristine Eng** (2nd from right) and **Dr. Kelly Shintani**. Dr. Kristine Eng and Dr. Shintani will continue to provide the excellent service Orindans have come to expect from the Orinda Optometry Group as Dr. Weylin Eng retires. A firm believer in giving back to the community, the Optometry Group has sponsored Chinese New Year celebrations at the Orinda Library and provided cupcakes from Republic of Cake for the city's 25th anniversary celebration this summer in Orinda Community Park.

## Well-Respected Optometrist Retires After Giving Much to Community



VALERIE HOTZ

**Dr. Weylin Eng** at his office in Orinda.

By **VALERIE HOTZ**  
Staff Writer

After 45 years practicing optometry and 25 of those years serving the Orinda community, **Weylin G. Eng, O.D.**, has announced his retirement. In addition to his optometry practice, Dr. Eng served as a captain in the United States Navy and served as the Director of Clinics and Special Assistant to the Dean of the U.C. Berkeley School of Optometry from 1983 to 2007.

"It has been a fantastic ride. I could not have picked a better profession. It enabled me to provide for my family, serve my country, and the University of California, as well as the opportunity to give back to my community," says Eng with a smile. Eng is a fourth generation Californian. His ancestors arrived in the Bay Area in the 1860s and settled in Oakland. His father, **Wellington Eng**, established an optometry practice there in 1935. In the 1960s, the elder Dr. Eng became the first Chinese American elected to the Oakland City Council. During World War II, he wanted to join the U.S. Navy as an officer but was discriminated against by his country and was denied solely on the basis of his Chinese ancestry. Years later, as Vice-Mayor of Oakland, **Wellington Eng** stood with admirals at Navy events while both his sons, each a captain, lined up with the officers.

Weylin Eng's first passion is music, which he studied as an undergraduate at U.C. Berkeley. He plays clarinet and saxophone and was a member of the Cal Band. "I wanted to be a musician, but after a conversation with my father, my music professor took me aside and let me know I needed to find a suitable career. Since my elder brother disappointed my father by becoming a dentist rather than an optometrist, it looked like optometry was the path for me," says Eng.

The Orinda community has benefited from the dedication and industry of the Eng family, who moved here in 1973. Weylin Eng is a longtime member of Orinda Rotary Club and the Masonic Lodge, and has actively supported Miramonte High School. His daughter, **Kristine Eng, O.D.** shares his

optometry practice and will continue the practice with **Kelly Shintani, O.D.** Eng's wife, **Roselyn**, served as a math teacher in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District for 35 years. Eng credits the late **Edgar Lana** for encouraging him to move to Orinda. "Ed and I were charter members of the Oakland Optimist Club. He was a great friend and mentor to me," recalls Eng.

Eng points out the four major advances in eye care that were developed during his 45 year career, referring specifically to cataract treatment, amblyopia (commonly known as "lazy eye"), improvement in contact lenses, and macular degeneration advances. "With respect to cataract care, we have gone from no treatment available to having a lens that permits good vision without glasses for intermediate, up close and distant ranges. Cataract surgery is constantly improving. In the case of amblyopia, the treatment was to put a patch over the eye and certainly if the condition was not detected before age 10, there was nothing that could be done for the patient. Special exercises have been developed to treat this condition and are effective to treat the far end of the spectrum. However, it is always important to have your children's eyes tested early in life by a professional," explains Eng.

The improvements in contact lenses have been particularly dramatic over the past 45 years. "The contact lens used to be made of clear plastic and could only be worn 5-6 hours daily. Today, lenses breathe almost as well as lungs breathe. People can wear contacts for a much longer time frame and in fact the FDA has approved contact lenses that can be worn during sleep," says Eng.

It took many decades of extensive research to bring about these great strides in eye treatments. The collaborative research going on between disciplines such as chemistry and optics is resulting in advances. "What is research today is clinical tomorrow. We have discovered that taking antioxidant vitamins, eating leafy spinach and broccoli and other foods rich in antioxidants will help slow down the progression of macular degeneration, the number one cause of blindness in the U.S. today. There is a laser surgery avail-

[SEE ENG page 9]

### Poetry Contest Winners Acknowledged



SALLY HOGARTY

In honor of its 25th anniversary, the City of Orinda held a poetry writing contest for residents of all ages. The winners were acknowledged at the October 19 City Council meeting and had their winning poetry placed in the city's time capsule. (L-R) Winners **Veronika Pister** (6th grade Orinda Intermediate School), **Chloe Morrison** (3rd grade, Glorietta Elementary), and **Wade Beury** (2nd grade, Del Rey Elementary) were given 25th anniversary pins by **Mayor Tom McCormick**.

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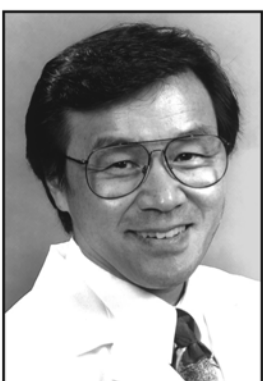
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NEW FILM

# Documentary about Women Becoming Priests Premieres in East Bay

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

A provocative new film by Carmel director Jules Hart challenges the Catholic Church's opposition to women in the priesthood. *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican* will be shown on Sunday, December 5, at 3 p.m. at the Orinda Theater.

"I'm not Catholic and wasn't really aware of the movement until I was approached about doing this film," says Hart. "I have a bit of a cringe factor with organized religions, but this film and the movement is more about social justice which I am very interested in." Hart will be at the Orinda premiere and will answer audience questions at the conclusion of the film.

An award-winning producer, director and editor, Hart founded Eye Goddess Films, which creates documentaries that help promote understanding through storytelling. She has explored such diverse topics as drumming as a spiritual practice, at risk youth creating a totem pole as a symbol of peace and healing after 9-11, storefront churches, and Latina healers. "As the stories



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ordained priests celebrate the mass. The women priests are not recognized by the Catholic Church.

from South Africa who felt a calling to be a priest and left her order after 40 years. She walks away without a job, a pension or even insurance. I just had to make this film."

*Pink Smoke Over the Vatican* was chosen as an official selection of the Hot Springs (Arkansas) 19th International Film Festival in October and has also received two awards at the Pasadena Action on Film International Film Festival: Best Female Filmmaker and Best Faith-based Film.

The premiere is sponsored by the Women of Magdala, a group of Catholic women and men from Contra Costa County who advocate for an equal role for women in the Catholic Church.

Tickets can be purchased in advance by calling 925-930-0129 or by emailing [journeyon37@yahoo.com](mailto:journeyon37@yahoo.com).



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Filmmaker Jules Hart.

unfold, we bear witness to the indomitable human spirit and are offered a chance at greater understanding, hope and healing," Hart says. Her work has aired on PBS and been shown at numerous festivals.

*Pink Smoke Over the Vatican* chronicles a group of Catholic women who feel a spiritual calling to be priests. As they take hold of their destinies, they also challenge the Vatican's position on women entering the priesthood, creating a topical and controversial film.

"I just fell in love with these women," Hart says. "Their courage really spoke to me. You don't normally meet people who put everything on the line for what they believe in. There is one Dominican nun



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bishop Patricia ordains another woman into the priesthood

◆ ENG from page 8

able that seals the leakage in wet macular degeneration. While there is no treatment for dry macular degeneration, it should be monitored because a good 20 percent of those people will develop wet macular degeneration," points out Eng.

As he enters retirement, Eng is looking forward to becoming involved in new projects, and spending more time with his family, especially his four grandchildren. Eng and his wife Roselyn will now be able to enjoy farming their fruit orchards in Woodland and Winters, which includes walnuts, plums, and pomegranates.

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POLICE BLOTTER

October 2010

**False Residential Alarms:** Officers responded to 110 false alarm calls throughout the city.

**Burglary - Auto:** 6 incidents were reported on Oak Rd., La Espiral, Las Vegas Rd., Claremont Ave., Overhill Rd. and Tarabrook Rd.

**Burglary - Residential:** 1 incident was reported on Ardilla Rd.

**Grand Theft - From Vehicle:** 4 incidents were reported on Brookside Rd., Stanton Ave., Ardor Dr. and Alta Vista.

**Vandalism:** 2 incidents were reported on Tahos Rd. and Tarry Ln.

**Vandalism - Misdemeanor:** 2 incidents were reported on Valley Dr. and Muth Dr.

**Arrests**

**Driving Under the Influence - Misd. < .08:** 5 arrests were made on Camino Pablo, Hwy. 24 W.B. at St. Stephens Dr., Moraga Way, Ardilla Rd./Camino Pablo and Camino Pablo/Santa Maria Way.

**Driving Under the Influence - Misd. > .08:** 2 arrests were made on El Camino Moraga/Moraga Way and Camino Encinas/Moraga Way.

**Drugs - Possession of Marijuana For Sale:** 2 arrests were made on Camino Pablo and Moraga Way.

**Drunk in Public:** 1 arrest was made on Brookwood Rd./Camino Pablo.

**Warrant Arrest:** 2 arrests were made on Orinda Way and Muth Dr.

- Compiled by Jeanette Irving, Orinda Police Department

Garden Clubs Beautify Orinda

Thanks to Orinda's four garden clubs, Orinda Junior, Orinda Valley, Orinda Garden, and Montelindo, Orindans enjoy colorful blooms in public places throughout Orinda. While the four groups each have their areas of the city to take care of, they often join together on projects. A recent project was sprucing up the planters on the Theatre Square side of town.



(L-R) Lani Shepp and Marty DeJonghe work in front of the Union 76 gas station.

Historical Society Plans Holiday Party

A highlight of this year's Historical Society celebration is the presentation by retired Caltrans employee and unofficial historian for the Caldecott Tunnel Ray Mailhot. Mailhot will be joined by Caltrans 4th bore public information officer Jeff Weiss for a fun and informative party.

The holiday party takes place on December 1 from 6 - 9 p.m. at the Orinda Community Church. Advanced reservations are a must for this festive dinner. To make your reservation, call the Historical Society at 254-1353.

- Sally Hogarty, Editor



Original Kennedy/Broadway Tunnel above current Caldecott Tunnel.

◆ CAPSULE from page 1

ceremony began with Sergeant Gary Gifford from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's office playing the bagpipes and leading the color guard made up of Boy Scout Troops 237 and 303. A lone bagpiper also led the members of that first city council in 1985 to their swearing in ceremony.

The October 21 festivities also included winners of the city's poetry contests reading their poems. "It's so appropriate to have a poetry contest and the winners reading their poetry today," said City Councilmember Amy Worth. "After all, our city is named after a poet." Worth was referring to Katherine Fowler Philips, a 17th century English woman who wrote under the name Orinda. Alice Mars Cameron enjoyed "the matchless Orinda's" poetry and in her honor, the Camerons named their landholdings Orinda Park in the late 1800s. Edward Ignacio de Laveaga established the town site as Orinda in the 1920s.



(L-R) Melinda Flanders, Dayna Taylor, Kim Larsen, Gina Field, and Janet Pease keep planters in front of Peet's Coffee and Tea looking good.

Traffic Issues On Moraga Way and Ivy Drive

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

In 2007, Ivy Drive residents complained about traffic created in the mornings and afternoons as parents of Orinda Intermediate students pick up and drop off their children. The problem was further exasperated by Miramonte High School students using Ivy Drive as a way to avoid the traffic along Moraga Way. A City Council subcommittee was formed and several traffic calming measures eventually instituted including restricting left turns from Moraga Way onto Ivy Drive during certain hours. This later measure has created difficulty and potential safety problems for other Orinda residents.

According to concerned resident Marie

Campos, the traffic supposedly diverted by the "No Left Turn" sign, just continues down Moraga Way and either turns left into Southwaite Court or Leslee Lane before making a U-turn and then a right turn onto Ivy Drive. "Some just make unexpected U-turns from Moraga Way," says Campos. "Children walking to school are constantly in peril of being hit by these vehicles." Campos says a "No Left Or U-turn" restriction for Southwaite Court or Leslee Lane would just "kick the can down the road and make it tougher for people going to Miramonte High School." Campos and other neighbors took their concerns to the November 15 Traffic Safety Advisory Council meeting. The committee recommended No Left Turn signs on Southwaite Court and Leslee Lane.



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HOLIDAY SHOPPING

# Holiday Shopping Without the Holiday Hassle

By FRAN MILLER  
Staff Writer

As the holiday shopping season kicks into high gear, you may be tempted to head to the mall, or sit comfortably at your computer as you wend your way through cyber deals. Sure, you may save a few bucks, but you'll miss the local holiday cheer that makes Orinda such a magical place this time of year. And, shopping local helps build the community by linking neighbors and building connections. You'll receive the best in customer service, as local merchants are able to select their products based on the interests and needs of their local customers. Shopping local helps to sustain our vibrant, compact, walkable town centers, and allows us to reduce our carbon footprint. And, shopping locally creates jobs, funds city services through sales tax, and generally promotes a sense of community. So before you hop in your car to spend your dollars elsewhere, consider all the options Orinda has to offer. Pinpoint a particular store or restaurant, or take a leisurely stroll through town (as we did) and pop in some of the places you've never ventured. It's fun and a great way to get to know your town and your merchants. You'll surely find a surprise or two.

**Shopping Orinda From East to West**

A natural first stop on your shopping tour is **McDonnell Nursery**, where you will find majestic, fragrant and fresh Christmas trees. Bring in your own tree stand, and they'll set-up your tree, deliver it to your home (for free!), and place it wherever you wish. "Our customers love this service," says Sara McDonnell. As for gifts, McDonnell's is always expanding its indoor gift items. "We have candles, diffusers, lotions, soaps and more," says McDonnell. "We also have a lot of holiday home decor this year. And, because it might not be the ideal time to buy outdoor plants, we're happy to offer gift cards." Enhance your tree with an old-fashioned train set from **Orinda**



**Sweet Dreams** in Theatre Square has lots of wonderful holiday gifts including these seasonally correct rubber ducks and mice.

**Hardware** – a distributor of the full line of Lionel Trains. Purchase the entire set-up, replace a broken piece, or find whimsical accessories to complete an entire winter village scene. A Lionel expert is available every Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon to answer your train questions. Though Orinda's **CVS Pharmacy** is small, the offerings are not – find stocking stuffers, gifts of beauty, and practical items, as well as gift-wrap. **Jamie Westdal Photography** has been an Orinda mainstay for 20 years. Her portraits of children, family and friends are meant to last for generations. If Jamie has never taken your photo, consider it time. If she has, consider the poignancy of a similar pose, several years later. Jamie is offering 50 percent off sittings through December. And, she says it's not too late to take your holiday photo and order cards. Purchase your holiday treats at **Loard's Ice Cream**, or pop a gift card into a well-deserving recipient's pocket. Be ready for holiday guests by stocking your refrigerator with refreshments from **Beverages and More**, where you'll also find an array of appetizers and beverage-themed gifts, such as the latest in wine-openers.

Cross the street to Theatre Square, to a child's idea of heaven – **Sweet Dreams**.

From the trendy (Silly Bands) to the classic (Lego), to books, puzzles and stuffed animals, the buyers at Sweet Dreams always have their pulse on what's hot for kids. Give the gift of art – **Allison McCrady Fine Arts** features Allison's own works, as well as the works of other renowned artists. She also offers painting classes. Rare is the recipient who is disappointed with a gift from **Starbuck's**, where the ubiquitous red holiday cup has become as inviting as the beverage itself. Pick up a gift card, grab a gift basket, or a pound of their "Holiday Blend." **Entourage Spa** offers full salon services, facial treatments, massage therapy, body treatments, and specialty packages for larger groups. Pamper someone you love with a gift certificate, or take a break from holiday madness by treating yourself. Delicious cupcakes from **The Republic of Cake** make for a festive dessert. Or pick up a "snack pack" for a hostess gift. The Republic of Cake uses top quality ingredients from local providers, keeping their product really simple, and really good. Chih Fang, co-owner and cupcake chef, says to expect some new flavors to reflect the holidays, such as chocolate/peppermint, gingerbread/lemon and eggnog/rum. After indulging in

cupcakes, a gift certificate for a fully customized nutrition and exercise program at **Living Lean** might be just the ticket.

Cross the street to find **Morrison's Jewelers**, a full-service family owned and operated jewelry store that has been in Bay Area existence for more than 75 years – 16 years in its present location. **Canetti's Bookshop** is an independent bookseller offering a great selection of well-organized new and used books. Customers love the "vibe," which includes dulcet music, and a cat or two. And after browsing for books, treat yourself to a new hairstyle or manicure right next door at **Orinda Hair Studio and Nail Care by Kim**. For the coffee-lover, consider an espresso machine from **Peet's**. "We'll even teach you how to use it," says Mike the friendly barista. "Grab one of our cool mugs, some coffee or tea, and some of our seasonal candy for a great gift. Ninety-

[SEE SHOPPING page 14]

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RESTAURANTS

# Enjoy a Break At One of Orinda's Fine Restaurants

By FRAN MILLER  
Staff Writer

Looking for a place to eat after holiday shopping? Orinda dining choices are more delicious and wide-ranging than ever before. You certainly don't need to leave town to find what you desire. From fast and simple, to warming comfort foods to casual gourmet offerings, Orinda has it all. Call last minute and order your meal for take-out, or make plans to celebrate the season with friends and family at great Orinda restaurants.

For a plentiful and quick breakfast, lunch or dinner, **Nation's Giant Hamburgers** (76 Moraga Way) delivers. The "giant" in the name says it all. Pick up a pie for your holiday dessert. **Maya Mexican Grill** (74 Moraga Way) offers traditional Mexican dishes based on family recipes. Try their mole sauce – a specialty. **Turquoise Mediterranean Grill** (70 Moraga

Way), a favorite of several Orindans, serves Middle Eastern fare. The falafel and hummus are recommended. **Europa Hof Brau** (64 Moraga Way) has been serving fresh, home-style entrees for more than 25 years. Across the street at 65 Moraga Way, **Trattoria Lupetti** serves Roman inspired food and wood fired pizzas in its airy, high ceilinged dining room.

Head to Theatre Square for the popular new **Table 24** where delicious comfort



Diners enjoy a delicious meal at **Casa Orinda**.

food is served. (From the steady crowds, it appears many Orindans need comforting.) Especially popular are the separate menus and special portions for "Littles" (under age 9) and "Middles" (ages 10-16). Open breakfast, lunch and dinner. Long-time favorite **Shelby's** continues to please locals with its California cuisine. The menu changes daily according to what is in season. Offering fast, casual dining with semi-table service is **The Lava Pit Fire Grill** featuring Asian Fusion and Hawaiian barbecue. They also offer curbside service. Another Orinda dining institution is **Serika**, featuring great sushi and Japanese food in a lovely, tranquil setting. The familiar smell of freshly baked bread wafts from omnipresent **Subway** where everyone can find a favorite sub sandwich. Round the corner to two more quick options – **Petra Café**, offering delectable Greek favorites such as gyro, spanikopita and baklava. Not much seating here, so take it to go. Get your hot dog fix at **Kasper's**, where they load your dog just the way you like it with a variety of toppings.

Cross the street and head around the corner to Contra Costa County's oldest continuously operating restaurant, **Casa Orinda** (28 Bryant Way) – a veritable East Bay institution. Their fried chicken is legendary. For cozy and inviting, try local favorite **La Piazza** (15 Moraga Way). Wood fired pizza and hearty fresh pasta make this

place popular with all ages. Next door is **Yu Sushi** (19 Moraga Way). Grab a quick meal of fresh sushi before or after a movie, or get some take-out.

Head to the Village side of town where we begin at **Hsiang's** (1 Orinda Way) for authentic Mandarin and Szechwan favorites in a quiet, peaceful atmosphere. **Village Pizza** (19 Orinda Way) has been an Orinda favorite for 25 years. The family-owned restaurant offers much more than just pizza. Pastas, burgers and ribs ensure that everyone in your party will be happy. The friendly service, ample parking and fresh sandwiches at **Orinda Deli** (19F Orinda Way) ensure many repeat customers. **La Cocina Mexicana** (23 Orinda Way, Suite H) presents traditional, authentic Mexican cuisine, along with their famous margaritas in a variety of flavors such as peach and strawberry. **Siam Orchid** (23 Orinda Way, Suite F) has one of the nicest bars in town. Enjoy a beverage while dining on Thai items from the culinary traditions of northern Thailand.

At **Village Inn Café** at Village Square, you'll find classic diner style breakfast and lunch, including old-fashioned milkshakes. Customers rave about the spicy tuna roll at **Niwa Restaurant**, (1 Camino Sobrante). **Zamboni's Pizza Company** (1 Camino



**Hsiang's** offers Mandarin and Szechwan favorites for your holiday guests to enjoy.

Sobrante) has regular and Chicago style pizza. They serve it by the slice at lunch-time. Eat in, or order to go at **Szechwan Chinese Restaurant** (79 Orinda Way). Make sure to specify your spice threshold. Call ahead for a table at tiny **Hanazen Japanese Sushi**, (87 Orinda Way) where the Chef prepares every dish himself. Check out the newly renovated **Baan Thai** (99 Orinda Way) and try their zesty avocado prawns or yummy chicken satay. Last but not least, **Geppetto's Caffe** (87 Orinda Way) has long been a mainstay for light breakfasts and scrumptious sandwiches.

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LOCAL AUTHORS

# Books Make Great Holiday Gifts for All Ages

By MOYA STONE  
Staff Writer

While E-book readers may be the latest hot gadgets, the old-fashioned book still places high on holiday shopping lists. Just ask Molly Young, staff member at Orinda Books. Molly is confident that real printed books this year will not fall out of favor. "There are some books," says Molly, "that don't translate well to a small screen – science and art books, books of photography, and coffee table books."

For those shoppers with books on their lists, giving a tome created right here in Orinda is considered an extra treat. Orinda residents are lucky to have as neighbors and friends many published authors of fiction and non-fiction, mysteries, children's books, and memoirs. Orinda Books, located in the Village Square, makes shopping easy with a section highlighting local authors. And they are happy to special order any title.

Here is a list of recently published books by Orinda authors available for holiday gift-giving.

**Fiction:**

For her novel *The Fiery Furnace: Has Teheran Changed Much in 100 Years* (Dorrance Publishing Co., 2009), Margaret Wood Little was inspired by what she knew of her mother's life as a daughter of American missionaries in Tehran. This latest book by Margaret tells the story of a young American woman living in Persia in the 1800s and her unconventional marriage to a missionary.

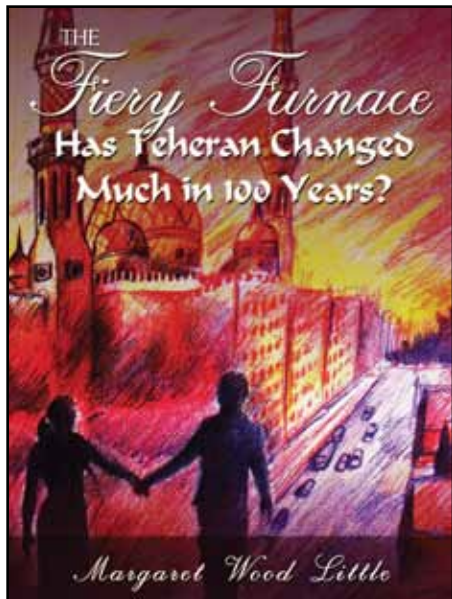
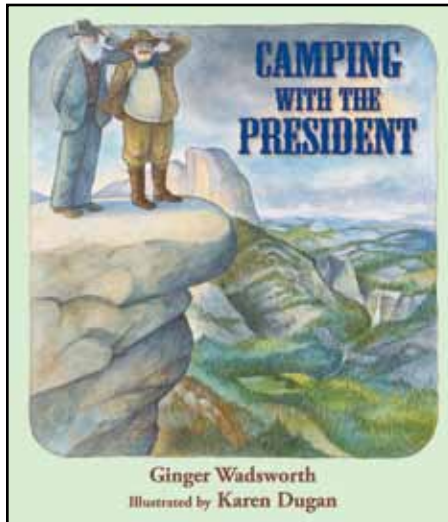
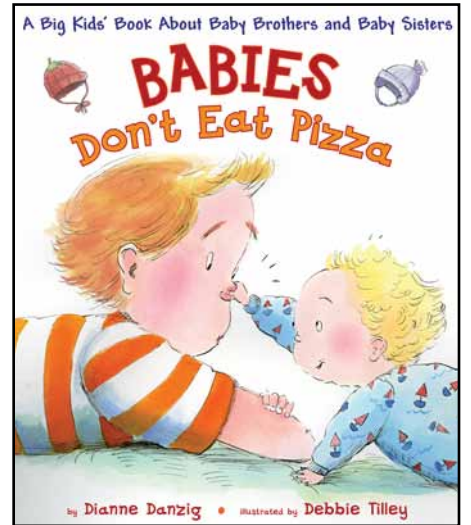
Mary Volmer is a graduate of Saint Mary's College in Moraga and now a professor and founding Director of the Saint Mary's Honors Program. Her debut novel, *Crown of Dust* (Soho Press, 2010), is set in California during the Gold Rush.

including Chinese New Year, Ramadan, Kwanzaa, and Hanukkah. Her most recent book is *Cinco de Mayo: Celebrating the Traditions of Mexico* (Holiday House, 2010, for grades 3-5).

Dianne Danzig is a Registered Nurse and leads sibling preparation classes. In her children's picture book, *Babies Don't Eat Pizza: A Big Kids Book about Baby Brothers and Baby Sisters* (Dutton, 2009), Dianne offers sound advice and comforting words to families expecting a new sibling.

**Mystery Lovers:**

Freelance journalist Marie Wagner Krenz turns her pen to mystery in her novel, *Fear* [SEE BOOKS page 15]



**Children's Literature:**

Prolific children's book author and naturalist Ginger Wadsworth's latest book, *Camping with the President* (Calkins Creek, 2009) tells the true story of John Muir's 1903 camping trip with President Theodore Roosevelt in Yosemite National Park. (For ages 9-12.)

Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith has written many books for children explaining the celebrations and traditions of various cultures,



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HOLIDAY SHOPPING

◆ SHOPPING from page 11

nine percent of our business has become coffee; people forget about our fabulous tea," says Mike, who believes that gift-cards are "too easy."

Crossing over to the Village side of town, eco-conscious shoppers will find two highly regarded consignment shops: **Hilton House** and **Cheryl's Closet**. Hilton House specializes in respected brand treasures, and features one-of-a-kind home furnishings, artwork, rugs and jewelry. Hilton House encourages shoppers to help the planet by recycling possessions. Cheryl's

Closet features a wide variety of gently used clothing, handbags, jewelry and shoes. Customers love that the clothing is conveniently displayed by color. Give the gift of health with items from **Natural Life**, featuring vitamins, supplements and natural beauty products. Manager Michael Boxer offers 15 percent off all bodybuilding and sport products with mention of this article. Orinda has several nail salons on the Village side to choose from, and a certificate for a manicure or pedicure, or both, is a welcome gift. You'll find **Angel Nails**, **Cindy's Village Nail Care**, and **Elaine's Nails** are more than ready to help. Visit the **UPS**

**Store** for all your shipping needs. Their best service might be their willingness to take all those annoying packing peanuts off your hands. **Chillers** has solved the need to leave town for frozen yogurt. Anyone with a weakness for frozen treats (smoothies, frozen yogurt and ice cream) will surely enjoy a gift certificate to Chillers. Give the gift of fitness with a gift certificate to **In Forma Integral Fitness**. Members love the variety of classes: yoga, Pilates, fitness and cardio classes, personal training and more. Younger fitness enthusiasts might enjoy a gift certificate for classes at **Lamorinda Martial Arts Studio**.


10 a.m. – 5 p.m. to personally exhibit his wares. And, as always, Orinda Books offers free gift wrap.

When planning your holiday shopping list, don't forget your pets. Find everything you need for your furry friends at **Orinda Pet Food and Supply**. For the hard-to-buy-for person on your list, consider custom framing at **Orinda Frame Store**. With their wide selection of frames and matting, they can transform a regular photograph, or piece of your child's artwork, into a masterpiece.

Give the gift of practicality with a gift certificate to **Orinda Motors**, one of the oldest businesses in town, and a strong community supporter with a wall of photos, plaques and certificates to prove it. "While not exactly glamorous, new windshield wipers, snow chains or a certificate for an oil change or a pre-winter service is something we all need," says service manager John Vanek. Scott McCue of **Scott McCue Photography** reiterates that it's not too late to schedule a family portrait for your holiday cards. In addition to portraiture, McCue specializes in the photography of Tribal Art objects, some of which can be found on display in his small storefront gallery. The **Orinda Village Horse Shop** provides equestrian necessities for horse and rider such as tack, supplies and great-looking apparel, as well as books, jewelry, and other horse related gifts for the horse enthusiast. And if they don't have it in the store, they can order from one of their large list of distributors. Set your holiday table with unique heirloom china pieces from **Orinda Village Antiques**, or find a special item for the collector in your family.

Carry on to Village Square where, in addition to ample parking, you'll find everything you need for health, beauty and the garden at **Rite-Aid**. Like the buyers at Sweet Dreams, **McCaulou's Department Store** buyers know what is "in." Not sure what to get your teen? Select something for him/her at McCaulou's and chances are it will be well received. McCaulou's is always up-to-date on the most desired clothing and accessory brands and styles, and the Orinda Village location is known for its well-stocked children and baby section. (And, they always offer free gift-wrap for a minimum purchase of \$15.) Next door is McCaulou's sister store, **Hollyhock**. Don't let the Hollyhock Stationery name fool you – yes, they do have stationery (and it's not too late to order your holiday cards), but they have so much more: cookbooks, soaps and lotions, games, jewelry. There is literally something here for every budget. This is a really fun place to browse. Give the gift of beauty with a gift certificate to **Orinda Beauty Supply**. The knowledge-

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Lots of shops beckon on the Village side of Orinda including these across from the library.

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"I'd had three babies in three years and was turning 40 and just couldn't find my way back to a fit lifestyle. Sheena and the team at Living Lean helped me get on a workout and healthy eating plan that got me down from a size 8 back to my pre-baby size 4's – yippee! I continue to get stronger and leaner. The best part, for me anyways, is being accountable each week, seeing the science behind the plan, and having the support of the Living Lean team behind me."

Kim Bonnar  
 Orinda



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able and friendly staff at **Orinda Books** can surely assist in finding the perfect gift for anyone on your list, and a perusal of their children's holiday book display will restore the holiday spirit to even the Grinchiest.

For adults, the manager recommends *At Home: A Short Story of Private Life* by Bill Bryson, *City of Tranquil Light* by Bo Caldwell and *First Family: Abigail and John Adams* by Joseph Ellis. For younger readers, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney has been popular. Orinda Books also features ceramics by Gerry Wallace, who will be at the store on December 10, from

Susan Leech presides over an abundance of china and silver, of which she can tell you the origin and history of nearly every piece in the store. She also teaches the art of "taking tea."

Finally, end your shopping tour with a foamy latte and pastry at **Caffé Teatro** at the Library. If you've followed this shopping tour and still have come up empty handed, a Caffé Teatro gift card should cover your bases.

Stephanie McConnell contributed to this article.

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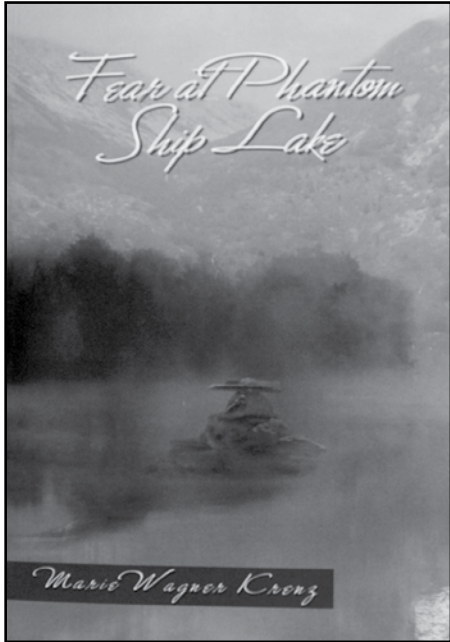
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 RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

BOOKS

◆ BOOKS from page 13

at *Phantom Ship Lake* (Xlibris Corp, 2010). While a small group of writers have gathered for a conference at Mt. Lassen, a murder and the disappearance of the conference host cause plenty of mystery and mayhem to keep readers on the edge of their seats.

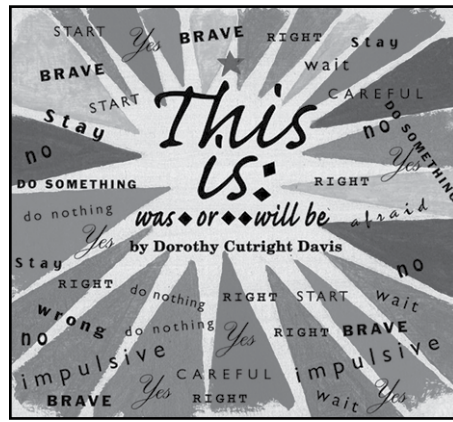


**True Stories:**

Inez Hollander, Ph.D emigrated from the Netherlands to the United States in 1994. She teaches in the Dutch Studies program at UC Berkeley and is the author of several books, including a memoir titled *Silenced Voices: Uncovering a Family's Colonial History in Indonesia*. (Ohio University Press, 2009)

**For the Artist:**

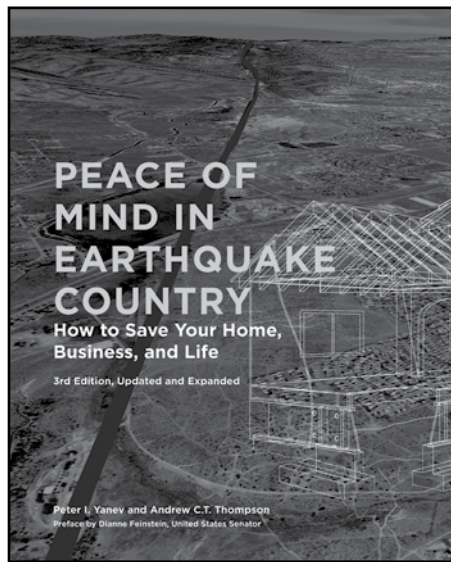
Longtime Orinda resident Dorothy Davis is a painter, teacher and author. Her latest book *This IS Was-or-will-be* (Falcon Press, 2010) is a collection of 64 narratives based on portraits Dorothy has painted over the years.



**Practical:**

Advice from civil engineer and Stanford professor, Peter Yanev, may be the best of all gifts. Peter has written *Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country: How to Save Your Home, Business, and Life* (Chronicle Books, 2009).

Local author John Benzie has just completed his first book. Read more about it on page 16.



Between the Lines  
Holiday Books—Jollification  
with Edification

Marian Nielsen, Orinda Books



The magic of books and reading seems to come most brilliantly alive in December. When we select books as gifts, we are sometimes extravagant and always thoughtful — savoring the pleasure of sharing with friends or family members something we know they will love. It does seem true that books we select as gifts are meant to give pleasure but also to edify. Publishers save the last months of the year for “important books,” books with serious content. A striking example this year is the November release of Volume I of *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* (U.C. Press \$34.95). The year 2010 marked the 100th anniversary of Sam Clemens’s death, and he had left strict instructions that much of his autobiographical material was not to be published until a century after his death when, he said, he would be “dead, unaware, and indifferent.” At Orinda Books, we’ve been amazed at the number of pre-publication orders we received from our customers for this title. What a wonderful gift, the frank, unvarnished, and wide-ranging, opinions of America’s wittiest writer.

But Mark Twain is not the only larger-than-life figure to stride off the printed page this season. A new biography of George Washington debuted earlier this fall. Ron Chernow’s *Washington: A Life* (Penguin \$40) is one of the longest of the many Washington biographies and succeeds in humanizing that elusive founding father while giving intriguing new dimension to his life. Another fascinating new biography, *Cleopatra: A Life* (Little Brown \$29.99) by Stacy Schiff, reaches much farther back in time to add lustrous depth to our images — many of which we owe to Shakespeare and/or Elizabeth Taylor — of the woman who was the wealthiest and most powerful ruler in the Mediterranean. She was queen at 18, married, and possibly murdered, two of her brothers, and had notorious liaisons with two of the most dominant men of her time, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Schiff brings us a woman of remarkable intelligence and character rather than merely the perfumed sexual seductress of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Readers seeking a more contemporary biography illuminating that bloody corner of the world in the early 20th century, will be happy with Michael Korda’s major new

biography of T. E. Lawrence, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (HarperCollins \$36). In his provocative text, Korda suggests that, had the vision Lawrence had for the Middle East been realized, much of the contemporary bloodshed in that region might have been averted. On the other hand, Korda writes, Lawrence has been considered an inventor of the modern insurgency and guerilla warfare techniques American soldiers meet in Afghanistan today.

In *Atlantic: Great Sea Battles, Heroic Discoveries, Titanic Storms, and a Vast Ocean of a Million Stories* (Harper \$27.99), Simon Winchester (*The Professor and the Madman*) gives readers a biography not of a person but of a place. Winchester has written a superb story of this stormy sea starting with the days when Phoenician seamen first sailed past the Pillars of Hercules, and concluding with a rather gloomy contemplation of the current uprising of the Atlantic — warming to the point that some day that great gray ocean may disappear.

And, as Winchester engages and edifies us in writing about the Atlantic, Bill Bryson (*A Short History of Nearly Everything*) turns our attention to what goes on inside our houses in *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (Doubleday \$28.95). From the story of the morphing of “The Hall,” as the only room of a cottage or a castle to the small entry where we put overcoats and umbrellas, to wonderful trivia about light bulbs, toilets or the spice trade, Bryson’s engaging narration is a classic example of informational entertainment.

Happy edification at holiday time is certainly available for younger readers. Mary Pope Osborne’s very popular *Magic Tree House* series this year takes her young protagonists, Annie and Jack, to Victorian London. Their mission is to find Charles Dickens, apparently suffering from writer’s block, and help him complete his new novel, appropriately enough, *A Christmas Carol. A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time* (Random House \$12.99, ages 7-12) — the 44th book in Osborne’s series — tells young readers quite a bit about the plight of the poor in 19th century London.

We readers of all ages – and our holidays – will be brighter as we take pleasure in these informative new titles this December.

Move of the Month

One-legged squat and shoulder press.



Hold light weights just above your shoulders and balance on one leg. Remaining centered, press the weights up as you bend your knee, lowering yourself into a squat. As you lower the weights back to start, straighten the knee and repeat. 6-12 repetitions per leg.

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LOCAL AUTHOR

◆ LETTERS from page 4

**Thank You Van Voorhis-Gilbert**

I want to personally thank Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert for running for OUSD board and for bringing many important issues into the public realm. I also applaud her courage before and during the race itself. Knowing before she declared her candidacy that there would be many individuals and groups opposed to her election, Bekki displayed great poise as the only candidate publicly attacked, falsely accused, and enduring multiple acts of vandalism. I have made this a lesson in adversity and bravery for my children.

Orinda parents by the hundreds have made a clear statement in this election: we are the primary stakeholders for our children's education, and the OUSD board is accountable for its actions. I hope she will find our support a continuing source of strength. Bekki, please continue your fine work to move the district towards greater transparency, fiscal responsibility, and responsiveness to parents and teachers for the benefit of our children.

— Robert Lowe

**Incredible Friends and Neighbors**

I know I lived in an ideal spot for the last 16 years, but until one really has a crisis in one's life, the generosity and caring of friends and neighbors was beyond astounding! I recently had open heart surgery that required many days at home. Basically, unable to do very little for myself, the divine Maltzer's (neighbors on our court) organized dinners to be brought in for the following weeks. Flowers arrived almost daily along with cards and calls to see just how I was feeling.

Lots of Orindans need to be thanked by Giampiero and myself for if it wasn't for these people, my transition from horizontal to vertical wouldn't have been as speedy

I'm certain! We are forever grateful to Diane and Paul Maltzer, Jenny and Sandro Rossi, Anli and Ed Leong, Nicole and Hank Collins, Pat and Glen Rudebusch, Michelle and Michael Lewis, Nancy and Don Case, Jennifer and Allen Lescure, Kay and Peter Yznev, Pam Freidman, Joanne Killman, Joyce, Jesakka and Diane Tarr, Rich and Marty Lewis, Michelle Chin, Susan Bippart, Pat and Lisa Emmons, Erika and Koji Kawata, Lou Fleming, Al and Janet Beck, Jamie Westdal, The Behnke Family, Pam McCulla, and Sylvia Frasier.

— Elizabeth and Giampiero Kirkpatrick

**Thank You Orinda Books**

I'm writing to express my gratitude that Orinda is fortunate to have our own wonderful bookstore. Orinda Books is a gem to all ages with a multitude of books to choose from and a wealth of knowledge in their staff.

In addition, Orinda Books has generously become the unofficial home to P.O.I.S.E. (Parents of Orinda Individuals in Special Education) for our most recent and three other prior parent meetings. Orinda Books welcomed audiences of 45-70 people to the store after hours with no fee to P.O.I.S.E. and, really, no book sales to expect either.

P.O.I.S.E. and the very appreciate attendees hope people realize our good fortune to have Orinda Books.

— Anna Tague

◆ DOWNTOWN from page 1

workshop is all about dialogue – getting as much information on what residents want as possible. In the next meeting, we will share the information from the cards and look at what is realistic for Orinda. Given the geographical constraints of the town, there is no silver bullet."

At the December 9 workshop, participants will receive the results from the October meeting and the comment cards then break into small group discussions on possible scenarios to revitalize the downtown area. "We hope to find a way to pull together to form a commonly held vision for Orinda," Beyon said.

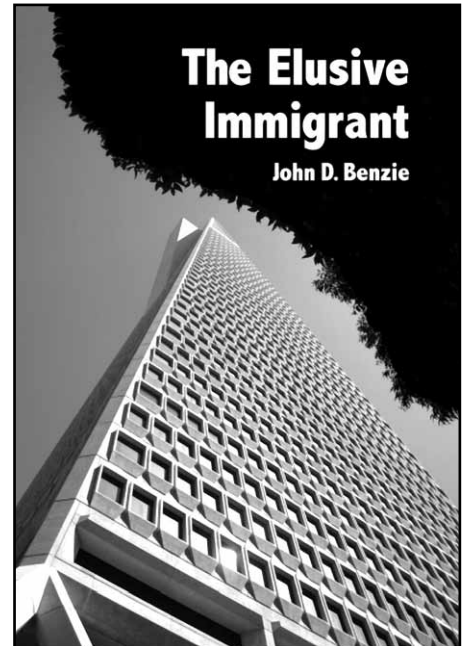
The PPRTF recommendations can be found on the City of Orinda's website, [www.cityorinda.org](http://www.cityorinda.org). Orinda Vision, a collaboration of Orinda design and project development professionals, has designed a series of drawings for uniting the theater and Village portions of Orinda with a pedestrian bridge and more. Go to [www.orindavision.com](http://www.orindavision.com) for more information. Save Orinda, a group of residents concerned about the proposed downtown plan – especially a proposal to increase the height limit of buildings, also has a website. Go to [www.saveorinda.com](http://www.saveorinda.com).

Local Author Finally Achieves Elusive Career

By KATHRYN G. MCCARTY  
Staff Writer

Orinda resident John D. Benzie is realistic about his career choices. He chose accounting rather than indulge his love of writing, but now he combines both in his first novel *The Elusive Immigrant*. The retired CPA calculates that the salary he would have earned during the four years it took him to complete this novel would equal "about a penny an hour."

In his suspense thriller, Benzie shares much in common with his protagonist, Sawyer Fawkes. Both work as accountants in the Pyramid Building. "Usually an accountant is the dullest possible character," Benzie explains. Playing against type, the writer decided the world needs a principal character that is a CPA who is not obsessed with spending hours pursuing a missing dime. "My protagonist breaks the law, runs from the police, and is nearly murdered. He relies on his intellect not strength,"



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
John Benzie's first novel is available at Amazon.com.

Benzie has always been a voracious reader, but through the years he became critical about the lack of writing skills of some published authors. After suffering through a series of poorly written books with improbable plots or badly written prose, he decided that he could do better.

"I don't think I had an overwhelming desire to write a novel when working full time," he says. "But after retiring from Transamerica in 1996, I decided I had the time to devote to writing. First with short stories, then the novel."

Benzie attended the Santa Barbara Writers Conference where he was presented an 'Excellence in Writing Award' by Ray Bradbury. "I was working on my novel but, ironically, won first place for humorous writing for a short story," he says.

Then came the idea for his first novel, *The Elusive Immigrant*. Cherry, his wife of almost five decades, served as Benzie's in-house editor. He describes the core of their work relationship as one of compromise. "We have survived many major home remodeling projects — sometimes you win one, sometimes you don't," Benzie adds.

"I can confidently state that my will generally prevails," the new novelist says, noting his editor doesn't always agree with that statement. Watching the couple at work, it is easy to assume protagonist Sawyer Fawkes will be one of those mysterious characters that begs a sequel.

*The Elusive Immigrant* is now available at Amazon.com (\$12.75 plus tax and postage). Autographed copies are available at [www.elusiveimmigrant.com](http://www.elusiveimmigrant.com).



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Orinda Author John Benzie.

Benzie says.

Benzie came to fiction writing in a unique way – through an office memo-writing course. "Each participant was asked to bring a short memo they considered well written. The memo had to attempt to change someone's way of thinking about some issue. Most of them were poorly written, far too long, and not very persuasive," Benzie explains.

In his business career, Benzie says most of his writing was "commentary on corporate financial issues, such as explaining accounting treatment of certain events and tax ramifications." At work, he penned "dull material with little descriptive." Benzie then adds that the writing he did in his former line of work "provided me an opportunity to hone my skills in saying in as few words as possible exactly what I wanted to impart."

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## WAY TO GROW

## Way to Grow

Grasses - a Natural Choice for Your Landscape

by Steve &amp; Cathy Lambert



Grasses have always been part of nature's own landscape, covering more than 20 percent of the earth's land mass. All grasses and grass-like plants are monocots. Most are from the family *poacea*, but also include flax (*liliacea*), carex, sedges (*Cyperaceae*) and rushes (*Juncaceae*). Because of their durability and versatility, ornamental grasses are being used more frequently in garden design.

Ornamental grasses can be used as specimen plants, border or background plants, smaller varieties can be used as ground covers while larger ones can be used as a planting screen. Their adaptability and beauty make grasses a great companion to flowering plants and woody ornamentals, not to mention their use as vertical fillers in flower arranging.

Ornamental grasses are available in a wide array of shapes, colors, textures, and sizes. Each grass species has its own unique form including compact mounds, tall spikes, or dense spreading mats. Grass foliage colors vary from shades of green, yellow, cream, blue, purple, and red as well as many variegated varieties, which combine several of these hues. While some grasses are deciduous and go dormant in the winter, they still offer a spectacular display of fall colors that can provide great early winter interest to your garden.

Grass flowers, also called inflorescences, and subsequent seed heads are equally diverse in color ranging from the rather ho-hum forest grass to truly spectacular pampas grasses which can be found in different shades of maroon, pink, silver, or beige. These inflorescences have the added benefit of drying well for indoor decorative uses.

With ornamental grasses, looks aren't everything. They add texture and an element of dimension to your garden which designers refer to as a "vertical accent." In addition, grasses provide pleasing wave like movement and soothing sounds to create a peaceful atmosphere in your garden.

Vertical accents are especially important when designing container gardens. Grasses or flax can be used as the main focal point of your pot or as a dramatic backdrop to contrasting plants. In our own yard, we've included a grass in almost every pot.

Once established, ornamental grasses require very little care. Sadly, this is not always viewed as a universal fact among yard maintenance companies. Maintenance workers are often trained to over prune grasses as if they were a manicured hedge. This results in a bad or flat top haircut appearance instead of their natural graceful, fountain shape. Grasses do best when left alone with an occasional thinning of dead blades and annual pruning. Deciduous grasses, which die back completely in winter, will be rejuvenated by cutting the entire plant back to within three or four inches from the ground. Take this harsh pruning approach in late winter when the grass starts to look ratty. Just be certain you don't wait too long. This must be done before early spring when the new growth starts or you risk cutting off the hidden tips of all that new growth.

Evergreen varieties also need to be cut back or cleaned up usually after the flowers start to fall apart. Recently, we saw the flowers cut off of a Japanese silver grass just as they were starting to bloom. This

not only robs the grass of its glory day, but can also stunt its growth.

It's important when designing with grasses to pay close attention to their height and width potential. We frequently see designs and gardens where grasses are planned or planted too close, creating a jungle like appearance. We are constantly reminding people not to over plant a new garden. The whole garden should be looked at as a living, growing space. If you must have that instant full look, keep in mind that grasses can be divided and moved around as your garden matures.

The following is a list of our favorite grasses: *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' Variegated Japanese Forest grass. This grass is at the top of our "favorites" list and finds its way into about 90 percent of the gardens we create. Boasting a bright golden foliage, it's leaves are variegated with green stripes near the margins. Find a sunny or partially shady spot for this grass as too much shade causes the golden strands to fade to a lime green. While this grass is a slow grower, often not reaching its mature size of one foot tall by three feet wide for three years, its durability and show stopping texture will reward the patient gardener for years to come. Most garden guides recommend this grass be grown in shade however, in Orinda we find that it grows poorly in deep or heavy shade and thrives in light shade. In our own yard this grass does great in full sun. Use it to line pathways and water features as well as in container gardens.

*Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata' Variegated Moor Grass. This tufted, compact, perennial has dense clumps of slender, foot-long, green leaves marked with stripes of creamy yellow. In the summer, slim, pale-yellow flower stalks rise up to two feet tall arching above the blades. Each inflorescence holds well into the fall, turning a toasty tan. We use this grass often as a focal point in containers, or atop a hillcrest, where the rising or setting sun can up-light its brilliant green and yellow strands. This grass is stunning when planted in mass.

*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' Japanese Silver Grass. This striking grass has an "inner light" that emanates from the white midribs of its finely-textured leaf blades each highlighted by threads of white around their edges. Its graceful



STEVE LAMBERT

Terra Cotta Yarrow and Deer Grass makes a nice addition to any landscape design.

shape usually matures to between five and six feet tall so give this plant plenty of space and be prepared to divide it after about five years. 'Morning Light' turns golden in November then fades to a winter beige and it's flowers can be cut and dried to enjoy indoors too. This grass makes a bold statement as a singular specimen and is a standout in small group plantings. For a cool color combo, group "Morning Light" with lavenders, and sages.

*Helictotrichon sempervirens* 'Sapphire Fountain.' The best Blue Oat Grass, in our opinion, with graceful fountains of steel-blue blades which form neat ornamental clumps that combine well when planted with other grasses. This grass is reliable and attractive as an accent or combination plant and is perfect for adding vertical interest around rock gardens or dry creek beds. For a stunning combination, plant 'Sapphire Fountain' next to purple leafed plants such as Japanese Barberry.

*Festuca glauca* 'Rainbow Blue Festuca' grass. This small, five to seven inch tall grass, is the bluest we've found to date, with the added bonus of ever changing seasonal color including red and tan blades at different times of year, hence the name, 'Rainbow' grass. It makes a great "cover" plant for banks and hillsides as it provides excellent erosion control. As an added bonus, the flowers it produces will attract "skipper" butterflies to your garden. In addition to hillside planting we frequently use this variety in rock gardens, pots and borders.

*Carex tumicola* 'Berkeley Sedge.' This is not an actual grass but a bright green grass-like sedge that retains its good looks year-round. This sedge matures at about two feet wide and two feet tall. It does well in either full sun or light shade with

occasional water. It's easy to grow and is a good companion plant for blue-eyed grasses, and other small flowering perennials. This hearty sedge does well under oaks and other trees, and can take a fair amount of neglect and abuse as long as it's cut back a couple of times a year after each bloom.

*Muhlenbergia rigens* 'Deer Grass.' A long-time resident of California and other southwestern states, this semi-evergreen grass is upright, thin and has arrow like silvery inflorescences reaching beyond its narrow, 18-inch high, gray-green foliage. Creating a shimmery veil in the landscape and adding angular pizzazz to dried arrangements, its reflective flowering stalks bend gracefully as they age. This is another grass to plant where it will bask in the glow of the setting sun. Deer Grass is a florist's favorite for arrangements too.

*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Fireworks' Tricolor Fountain Grass. This is the latest of the hybrid purple leaf fountain grasses. Firework's dazzling, maroon foliage has stripes of white, green and pink that change throughout the seasons. It makes a nice medium height border plant at 18 to 30-inches, as well as a great rock garden accent, or container plant. It's clump forming and drought tolerant which when combined with the array of season changing color makes this grass a great pick for any garden. For an eye-catching duo, plant Fireworks with *Tutti Fruitti Agastache* 'Licorice Mint.' Although not all of the grasses we've listed are native, most are drought tolerant, deer resistant and have a proven track record of thriving in our Orinda micro climate.

If you have specific question about some of the varieties of grasses in this article or one we didn't include, please email us at [office@gardenlightslandscape.com](mailto:office@gardenlightslandscape.com).

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## CONTINUATIONS

## ◆ 4TH BORE from page 5

and had to wait in a long backup because only one bore was open. With the addition of the fourth bore, two tunnels will always be available in both directions.

While the first public meeting concerning a fourth bore was held in 1990, funding was difficult to obtain. In November of 2004, Contra Costa County voters passed Measure J, an initiative that continued a 1988 half-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects. "The availability of this fund was the impetus for obtaining additional funds. "Without Measure J, there would be no fourth bore project," said Maria Viramontes, chairperson of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority. The measure provides nearly 30 percent of the project's funding.

The \$200 million obtained from President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act jump started the project, according to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. It was the largest Recovery Act allocation in the nation at the time it was granted. It is estimated the project will cost \$420 million and be completed in 2013. This amount includes the environmental



COURTESY OF CALTRANS, DIST 4,  
JOHN HUSEBY PHOTOGRAPHER

A roadheader, like the one shown above at Devil's Slide, is being used to build the Caldecott Tunnel's fourth bore.

clearance, design, right of way, and construction costs.

The project's first steps consisted of tree removal, the planting of fast-growing Leyland Cypress trees, and construction of a temporary sound wall 1,000 feet long and 35 feet high. This was done to trap the noise, light and dust generated during construction when trucks use the narrow strip between the freeway and the wall as a staging ground for a concrete plant, water-treatment facility, and dumping area for excavated soil. Upon the tunnel's comple-

tion the sound wall will be demolished and the cypress trees removed. Then this area will be covered with an earthen berm 20 feet high at the crest, and landscaped with grass and trees. A small eight-foot sound wall will be built on top of the berm.

It is estimated that 280,000 cubic meters of material will be excavated. Since it expands by a ratio of 1.8, the total amount would be about 504,000 cubic meters. This volume would fill a football field to the height of 390 feet. Treasure Island and Hunter's Point will use the soil for fill. Depending upon the type of soil and rock, crews tunnel between five to ten feet a day. Weiss says, "It's very slow, deliberate work. The harder the rock, the further the crews can tunnel each day as hard rock is more self supporting."

Weiss continues, "The highest number of people working on the site at any one time is about 250, not including the design or Caltrans field staff. Since the project will use so many materials and a great deal of outside labor for such things as trucking, electricity, steel and concrete manufacturing, we put the number of jobs created directly and indirectly at somewhere near 4,500."

During construction, paleontologists have found over 500 specimens, including a camel's tooth, a horse femur and a partial skull from an oredont, which is a prehistoric ruminating pig, according to Weiss. All fossils will eventually be given to the University of California Berkeley. The University has drawers full of fossils from the construction of the first three bores, even though environmental laws were not in effect at the time of their construction.

The roadheader machine was chosen over a tunnel-boring machine because it costs less and is better suited to a job encompassing a variety of rock types. It can be operated from the cab, or for a better view of the work, outside with a remote control, much like one would control and fly a model airplane.

It's of interest to note the changing technology in tunnel construction. The third bore, constructed in 1964, was excavated using the old method consisting of blast, shore and muck. Four foot blast holes were cored into the rock face, the rock was blasted, steel shore set, and then the blasted rock was hand shoveled into mine cars which were rolled out on downward sloping tracks. Even with this labor-intensive method, progress of one foot per hour was often achieved.

To witness the sights and sounds of the current construction on this long-awaited tunnel, log on to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and put "Caldecott Fourth Bore" in the search line.

## ◆ GALLERY from page 2

developing their artwork further and raising their level of professionalism. In this series, according to *Kunstanke* member TaVee, "We interacted with Lorrain's work from the 1600s, which is idealized and pastoral; we wanted to make a bridge to our world and what our life is like; how things change, and how they stay the same, an artistic conversation about that." Because Lorrain's drawings and sketches are fresh, or studies for paintings, they are unfinished and in a sense "loose," which allowed room for contemporary additions and interpretations. For more about Claude Lorrain, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude\\_Lorrain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Lorrain).

*Kunstanke* members hope viewers will, "Consider the impact of our actions and how they affect others in our world." TaVee believes "Art brings life and pleasure to our community; it's really important to have things to think about other than facts, concrete and obligations." *Kunstanke* certainly brought "community" to this project, as they collaborated on it from start to finish over two years. Members contributing works to this show include Jimmie Beardsley, Kari Brinck, Becky Busi, Phyllis Lasché, Myra Latkin, Marina Li, Shun-An Lee and TaVee.

While the walls will be filled with the "Conversation," the cabinets will feature a more nautical theme – Tall Ships. The late Walt Ulrich of Moraga was passionate about building model ships – he started in 1953 and continued to his death at 80 years old in 2008. Fortunately, his wife Joan is now the steward for this rare collection of delicate vessels, wrought with such care, finesse and dedication. Joan recalls that Walt always loved ships and working with wood and tools. "What he liked best was how it took his mind off of everything else as he became completely absorbed in the ship," she says. The show includes 12 of Walt's models including the AMD Nina (a small wood model), the Nippon Maru, the Cutty Sark, a Lobster Smack, the USS Constitution, two versions of the SS United States, the USS Missouri, the USS Arizona, and galleons including The Flying Cloud,

the HMS Victory, and the Spanish Galleon of 1540.

Ulrich's tools included a scalpel, tweezers, magnifying glasses, vise, small paintbrushes and enamel paint. He used grommets as portholes for the large model of the SS United States and window screen as boat railings. The lifeboats were modeled from plaster of Paris, and he used sewing thread to accurately rig the sails (which go



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Birds On a Wire is a fun mixed media featured in the Library Gallery's December show.

up and down). In 2005, Ulrich completed the SS United States, which he began in 1953. Family and friends were invited to a "launch" party, and he was written up in the *Contra Costa Times*. Joan recalls traveling with him to the Marin Headlands to watch the tall ships come into the San Francisco Bay under the Golden Gate Bridge – thrilling. They train midshipmen from all over the world on these ships so they are conversant with old sailing methods. The opportunity to train on these tall ships is coveted by sailors.

Joan Ulrich hopes the display of her husband's models will inspire others to build models, go sailing, or become interested in ships. The entire family became involved in Walt's passion when they would go camping; young and old would work side-by-side on the models – memories now treasured by all.

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. The gallery is closed December 22-26 for the holidays.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pieces from **Walt Ulrich's** rare collection of Tall Ships will be exhibited in the library's display cases.



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## ORINDA FAMILY IN CHINA

# Adventurous Orinda Family Adjusts to Life in China

By JULIE MCCORMACK  
Contributing Writer

*Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles by Julie McCormack on her family's experiences living in China. Julie, her husband Michael Roemer, and children, Conor Roemer (age 9 - 4th grade) and Erin Roemer (age 8 - 3rd grade) moved to Chengdu, China on August 6 for one year to learn Mandarin and experience life in a foreign country. Before the move, the children were students at Glorietta Elementary School, and Michael was a prosecutor in the Alameda County District Attorney's office. Michael, who had been with the District Attorney's office for 25 years, took a one-year leave of absence. Julie also took a leave from her job as a part-time Mandarin instructor for the Orinda Mandarin Program.*

Our idea to spend a year in China started with a two-week trip we took to China three years ago. We visited Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Jiuzhaigou National Park (Sichuan province). It was a wonderful trip and although our kids were only almost 5 and 6-1/2, they exceeded our expectations as hardy travelers. Of the three big cities we visited that trip, we all agreed that Chengdu was our favorite and that, if we moved to China for a year, it would be to Chengdu.

In preparation for this move, we made a reconnaissance trip in January 2010. We checked out schools, neighborhoods and several apartments. Fortunately, we met an American family from Sonoma who were having the closest approximation to the China experience we wanted: living in a centrally-located Chinese neighborhood, kids attending the Chengdu Waldorf School, and having an assortment of Western expatriate and local friends. In the end, we took over the lease on their 3-bedroom, 2-bath apartment and purchased all their furniture, kitchen items, bedding and towels. They left English books, games and sporting equipment for our kids, as well as a very complete binder filled with practical



MICHAEL ROEMER

Erin, Conor and Julie in Wangjiang Park, one of their favorite places in their new home of Chengdu.

information on life in Chengdu.

Before we left, we rented our house, and I obtained a job teaching English at Sichuan University. Unfortunately, at the 11th hour this job fell through, but we decided to still go through with the move. Michael procured a volunteer project with the Nature Conservancy to research and write a chapter of a book on Chinese land conservation.

We registered Conor and Erin at the Chengdu Waldorf School – a Mandarin-medium school based on the Waldorf method developed by Rudolph Steiner. We chose this school because we wanted the kids to be in a Mandarin-medium school, knowing that a local Chinese public school would be too difficult. Waldorf focuses on arts, music and handicrafts, and has a developmental approach.

When we arrived in Chengdu in August, we were all wiped out with jet lag and pretty depressed. I know I was wondering how I ever thought this move could be a good idea?! Our apartment had been sitting around without air conditioning for a couple weeks, so it smelled musty and moldy. Erin couldn't stand it. We decided aromatherapy was going to be needed for the smell.

After unpacking, we set out for dinner. Michael and I successfully used an ATM to withdraw *renminbi* (Chinese currency) and bought some fresh fruit. In China, accomplishing small things like that are big feats.

On the walk home, Erin was complaining about the smells again. Poor Erin, with her heightened sense of smell, living in Asia will be a challenge. I was feeling blessed to be oblivious to the worst of it. Conor complained that he didn't like "everyone staring at him." The Chinese are very subtle about it, but it can be annoying when you are exhausted and feeling unable to cope. We suggested the kids take it one day at a time. Conor responded, "More like one second at a time!" Not exactly the way I had imagined starting this adventure.

A few days after we arrived, Erin decided she wanted to play with the neighbor girls who we'd seen in our building. The girls and their families were very welcoming, and Erin played with them first in their apartment and then in ours. I asked Erin if they could understand each other and she said, "Not really." It didn't seem important to her.

Despite some positive experiences, our time since arrival has been like a rollercoaster – unfortunately, not the type of rollercoaster my kids like, which is characterized by lots of highs. This rollercoaster has huge dips and only mild rises. We go up and down minute by minute.

Erin mentioned at one point that she liked



JULIE MCCORMACK

Conor, Michael and Erin at a local Chengdu noodle shop.

our Chengdu apartment better than our house in Orinda. I was more than a little surprised to hear that. Conor scoffed! Both kids seem to be acclimating better than Michael and me, but maybe it's just the timing. When they're down, we're up and vice versa. We've had to relax our strict rules on "screen time" because we seem to have a lot of time on our hands, and the kids want to email and connect with their friends or watch a movie or play a game on the computer. I don't have the energy to say no.

Conor and Erin have been great about trying new foods – whether it's vegetables, spicy noodles, or Chinese donuts. They are becoming quite adept at using chopsticks, as other utensils are rarely available, and have even developed their own technique of cooling their piping hot noodles by pulling up a wad on the chopsticks and then waving them over their bowls of soup.

Despite saying that they do not understand any Chinese, when we are together, the kids are starting to speak more. One night after dinner, we stopped at the local fruit stand across from our building (open 7 a.m. until at least 10 p.m. with three generations operating the stand at different times of day). Erin ran up and asked for *wu ge xiangjiao* and *wu ge pingguo* (five bananas and five apples). When Michael picked the kids up from school recently, they took a taxi home and Conor directed the taxi by telling the driver the closest big street (few taxi drivers ever know our street) and then telling him when to stop.

Without a car or bikes, we walk a lot here and you learn quickly to be a defensive walker. One can never cross the street – even when the walk sign is flashing – without looking both ways numerous times and avoiding the inevitable car/motorcycle/bike/rickshaw driver who is ignoring the signal and turning. One must also watch

out for buckled tiles and chunks of concrete on the sidewalk. Michael almost fell flat on his face one day because there was a huge buckled section of the sidewalk that he didn't notice. When it rains, the sidewalks become very slick and one must step gingerly to avoid slipping. The sidewalk is not safe from motor vehicles either, whether it's motorcycles, rickshaws or even cars! It's common to see a motorcycle coming down the sidewalk against traffic, and it's the pedestrians' responsibility to get out of the way.

One night when we were exploring Chengdu, we walked onto the campus of the Southwest University for Nationalities – a very pleasant, wooded campus with pathways and stone yards where families gather to cool in the evening. Conor, Erin and Michael stood behind a group of women doing tai chi and imitated them for a while. Then we found some basketball courts that actually have nets, which many of the local courts are lacking. At one court, six boys Conor's age were playing three on three half court. Conor walked up and began watching them wistfully. Then, one boy spotted Conor, and either suddenly developed an injury or feigned one, and implored Conor to take his place. Conor gratefully joined the game, and played until dark. Every time Conor scored, all the boys would applaud him. We noticed they weren't applauding anyone else, but reserving the applause for him.

So ended our first month in China, with the transition for Michael, Conor, Erin and me still in full swing. Who knows what the next month will bring. We hope for a roller coaster ride with more ups than downs.




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SCHOOLS/STUDENTS

## OIS Student Performs on New York Stage

By KATHRYN G. MCCARTY  
Staff Writer

There's one wish that Gabriel Byrne, a 6th grader at Orinda Intermediate School, has about his recent performance on the New York boards. "I wish I could do it again," the 12 year old says.

As one of the cast members from Marquez Charter Elementary in Southern California, Gabriel had the honor of performing in the new musical *Water & Power*, which was chosen to be performed at the Duke Theater in NYC, just off Broadway.

The musical was selected to be part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival, an annual three week fall festival highlighting new musicals. Gabriel's mother Kasey says, "The cast was the youngest cast ever invited to perform at the festival."

According to Gabriel, the original production, with book and lyrics by Jeff Lantos (Gabriel's teacher) and music by Bill Augustine, tells the story of the Industrial Revolution, through the experiences of the workers in the cotton mills in Lowell, MA.

"It was lots of fun. I was nervous and excited - it was sort of scary, I guess," says Gabriel, the eldest of four children, who also enjoys fencing (epee), as well as playing saxophone and basketball.

"Mr. Lantos said that we worked really hard and made this show really good - that the play was chosen to go to New York," Gabriel said. "Then the whole cast started talking and screaming ... we were really excited." The cast was comprised of about 30 students, most of whom were 6th and 7th graders."

The Marquez Arts program is an innovative one which integrates theater directly with history, so that students perform a show based on the history curriculum.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
**Gabriel Byrne**, a 6th grader at OIS, performed in an original musical in New York City.

Gabriel appreciated the learning style. "I probably learned twice as much from the theater program as I did sitting in a classroom with a book. You have to learn the lines, and say them over and over again, and really memorize them. Mr. Lantos would usually explain the history on the lines and scenes that were important, so that we understood the play better - and the history too, I guess."

Lantos has written other historical musicals like *Miracle in Philadelphia* (which Gabriel also performed in) that tells the story of the Constitutional Congress of 1787.

The production of *Water & Power* at Gabriel's school was much more simplistic than the NY production. "At my school, it was much more laid back. Not very many props and we were on the floor, not on a real stage, with a single set back drop," Gabriel explains. "In New York, there were changing backgrounds, and we had mics and more advanced technology."

His mom Kasey adds, "The executive producer of the NYMF reviewed it as 'adorable and entertaining.'"

Although the cast had a lot of rehearsals and performances while in NYC, Gabriel did manage to take in the Broadway musical *Memphis* which won four Tony Awards last year.

What did young Gabriel learn from the experience? "If you work really, really hard, you can go places and do amazing things."

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## Holden High School Fundraising Drive

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

Orinda's Holden High School is in the middle of its annual fundraising drive. Thanks to past contributions, the school has added a computer lab, renovated the garden that also serves as a biology lab, and added online classes.

"Holden High offers a wonderful alternative for students who are not thriving in more traditional educational settings," says board member Kay Norman. With only 40 students, Holden High features small classes with lots of individual attention. The personalized curriculum includes class sizes as small as six students.

The school has also developed a transition program that helps graduates achieve life goals. For some students that means entering a job-training program or securing an internship. For others it might include registering at a community college or a four-year university.

For more information on Holden High or to support the school, go to [www.holdenhigh.org](http://www.holdenhigh.org).

## Orinda Academy Teacher Wins Prestigious Award



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
**Jeff Quittman** was honored in November with a grant from the Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust for his commitment to his students.

By MIRIAM SCHAFFER  
Contributing Writer

Jeff Quittman, an Orinda Academy history teacher, recently won a \$10,000 grant from the Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust.

Quittman, who has taught at Orinda Academy for 23 years, is one of three Contra Costa county teachers receiving the award from the community-based non-profit organization, which honors teachers who show extraordinary commitment to students.

"Jeff is highly deserving of this award," says Ron Graydon, founder and director of Orinda Academy. "Many of our students have learning differences and have often been told what they are unable to do. Jeff's warmth, patience, passion, and encouragement have inspired students to understand all that they can achieve, enabling many students to excel."

As a history teacher, Quittman's philosophy is to provide a broadly humanistic approach to the ideas, events, peoples, and extraordinary individuals that have shaped

our world. Students learn critical thinking skills while gaining a passion and appreciation for the rich variety of past and present experience, and the multiplicity of ways in which they connect to and illuminate one another.

The award was presented to Quittman, Randy Kinavey of California High School, and Renee Travis at Morello Park Elementary School at the Eukel Teacher Trust's 19th Anniversary Awards Dinner on November 18 at the Diablo Country Club. The event was hosted by food and wine critic, Narsai David who designed a multi-course dinner prepared by chefs from Diablo Country Club, The Door, The Peasant & The Pear, Prima Ristorante, Sasa, Va de Vi, Yankee Pier and the Contra Costa College Culinary Arts Program.

The Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust fosters excellence in education by providing monetary grants to outstanding teachers in Contra Costa County, California. Since 1992, the Eukel Teacher Trust has awarded more than \$400,000 to 52 outstanding teachers. For more information, go to [www.eukelteachertrust.org](http://www.eukelteachertrust.org).

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## CALENDAR

## ON THE CALENDAR

## DECEMBER

- 1 **Orinda Historical Society** Holiday Dinner, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, social, 6 p.m., dinner, 7 p.m. Call 254-1353 for reservations. Everyone welcome.
- 3 **Ninth Annual Overhill Road Holiday Boutique** with handcrafted gifts and foods from more than 30 local artists. Proceeds benefit Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. 214 Overhill Road, Orinda. Dec. 3, noon to 8 p.m., also Dec. 4 and 5, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 253-9065 or 254-3944.
- St. Stephen's Episcopal Church** Sing Along Messiah, 7:30, 66 St. Stephen's Dr. Rehearsal at 7 p.m. on December 2. Call 254-3770.
- 4 **Holden High School** Art Show, silent auction, raffle, student and staff performances, hosted by Remedy Salon, 1165-65th Street, Emeryville, 7 to 9 p.m. Visit [www.holdenhigh.org](http://www.holdenhigh.org).
- Hospice Tree Lighting**, Bank of America parking lot, 31 Orinda Way. Orinda school choirs will sing holiday music and Santa Claus will arrive on a fire truck. Sponsored by Hospice and the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, 4:30 to 6 p.m. Call 254-3909.
- 7 **Orinda Arts Council** Holiday Luncheon, Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, noon to 2 p.m. Orinda Idol singers will perform and Orinda Intermediate School Bulldog Theatre will present a scene from their upcoming production of *Snow White*. \$28. Everyone welcome. RSVP by Nov. 30 to Myrna Witt at [keyofm@aol.com](mailto:keyofm@aol.com).
- 9 **Orinda Chamber of Commerce** Holiday Mixer, Citibank, 37 Orinda Way, 5:30 to 7 p.m. Call 254-3909.
- City of Orinda** Community Workshop on Downtown Orinda, 7 p.m., Orinda Community Church Fellowship Hall, [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).
- Winter Instrumental Concert**, Miramonte High School Theater, 750 Moraga Way, 7:30 p.m. Visit [www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/miramonte](http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/miramonte).
- Holden High School's** Holy Terrors Theatre Project, presents *Women and Wallace*, also Dec. 10, 11, 16, 17 and 18 at 8 p.m., 10 Irwin Way. Limited seating, reservations required. Call 254-0199.
- 10 **Holiday Show and Sale** by local ceramic artist Gerry Wallace, Orinda Books, 276 Village Square, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 254-7606.
- 15 **Miramonte** Winter Choral Concert, Miramonte High School Theatre, 750 Moraga Way, 7:30 p.m. Also Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. Visit [www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/miramonte](http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/miramonte).
- 16 **Orinda Intermediate School** Winter Concert, 80 Ivy Drive. Call 258-3090 or visit [www.orindaschools.org/ois](http://www.orindaschools.org/ois) for time.

## AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified. Please note the library will be closed Dec. 22 to Dec. 26 and Dec. 30 and 31.

- 1 **Toddler Lapsit**, stories, songs and fingerplays for 1- to 3-year-olds and their caregivers, 10 to 10:30 a.m. and 10:30 to 10:55 a.m. Also on Dec. 7, 8, 14, 15, 28 and 29. Attendance limited to once per week.
- 4 **Holiday Book Sale** hosted by Friends of the Orinda Library, Bookshop and Sorting Room, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Saturday Morning Live**, story time for 3-year-olds and older and their caregivers, Picture Book Area, 11 to 11:30 a.m. Also Dec. 11 and 18.
- 7 **Peek-A-Boo Time** with songs, stories, rhymes and rhythm for newborns through 1-year-olds and their caregivers only, 11:30 to 11:55 a.m. Also Dec. 14 and 21.

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

## CLUB MEETINGS

- Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Masonic Center. Contact Karen Seaborn, 925-689-0995.
- Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe**. Third Monday, 7:30 p.m., Moraga-Orinda Fire District Conference Room, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga. [www.moragaadobe.org](http://www.moragaadobe.org).
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**. Fourth Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library. Call 253-1997.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**. Every Friday, 7 a.m., Postino's in Lafayette 254-0440, ext.463.
- Lamorinda Toastmasters**. Every Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Temple Isaiah, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, [www.lamorinda.freetoasthost.net](http://www.lamorinda.freetoasthost.net).
- Montelindo Garden Club**. Third Friday, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 9 a.m., [www.montelindogarden.com](http://www.montelindogarden.com).
- Orinda Rotary**. Every Wednesday at noon, Community Center, 254-2222.
- Orinda Association**. Second Monday, 7:15 p.m., Orinda Library, May Room, 254-0800.
- Orinda Hiking Club**. Please visit our website at [www.orindahiking.org](http://www.orindahiking.org) or call 253-1465 for schedule of upcoming hikes.
- Orinda Historical Society**. Third Wednesday of the month, 3 to 5 p.m., OHS Museum, 254-1353. Orinda Historical Society Holiday Dinner, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 6 p.m., social, 7 p.m., dinner. Call 254-1353 for reservations. Everyone welcome.
- Orinda Job's Daughters**. First and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 925-283-7176.
- Orinda Juniors** community service group. First Tuesday of the month, September to June, 7 p.m. Contact Diane Petek and Ann Sullivan at [orinda.juniors@yahoo.com](mailto:orinda.juniors@yahoo.com) for location.
- Orinda/Tábor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**. Fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.
- Orinda Teen Advisory Council**. Second Wednesday of the month, 4 p.m., Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. For information, email [orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com).
- Orinda Woman's Club**. Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon; call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.

## CITY/FIRE/SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

- Acalanes Union High School District**. First and third Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m., district office, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette.
- City Council**. First and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).
- Historic Landmarks Committee**. Fourth Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m., Library Garden Room. Call 925-788-7323.
- Moraga-Orinda Fire District**. Third Wednesday, 7 p.m., Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.
- Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees**. Second Monday, 4 p.m., OUSD Conference Room, 8 Altarinda Road. For the latest listing of dates, please check the website at [www.orindaschools.org](http://www.orindaschools.org).
- Planning Commission**. Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).

Send calendar items to Maggie Sharpe at [m.sharpe66@gmail.com](mailto:m.sharpe66@gmail.com)

## St. Stephen's 16th Annual Messiah Sing

By BRENDA FREE  
Contributing Writer

Come and sing with your friends and neighbors in this Christmas classic on Friday, December 3, 7:30 p.m. at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephen's Dr. in Orinda. Better yet, get a really good seat by rehearsing (just once) on Thursday, December 2, 7 p.m., in the sanctuary and singing with the Festival Choir! We look forward to being conducted by Bob Adams, St. Stephen's Minister of Music, who will direct the Festival Choir, professional soloists, and chamber orchestra with harpsichord and organ. This event is a major annual fundraiser for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties, and an eagerly anticipated community celebration.

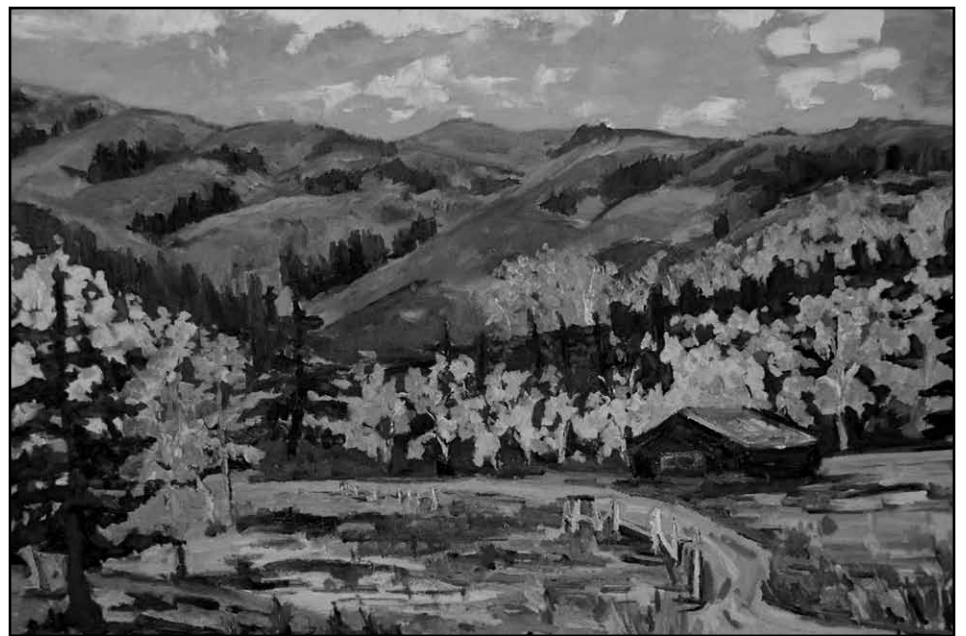
There is no fee for this event, but a good will offering will be taken for the Contra Costa Food Bank.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Last year's sing along Messiah at St. Stephen's Church.

## Collection of California Landscapes Exhibit at aMFA Studio



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pam Glover's "October Afternoon" is among the paintings in the exhibit.

Allison McCrady Fine Arts (aMFA) is featuring a number of prominent landscape artists in the current show at her Theatre Square gallery. Artists include Pam Glover, Ann Marie Glover, Taki Tu, May Spain, Rob Becker, Rob Foss, Susan

Kendall, Maria Santostefano, Mary Claire Stotler, Pam Wright, and Shanon Essex. The local artist and gallery owner has also recently opened a second showplace in Berkeley at 10th and Gilman. For more information, go to [www.allisonmccrady.com](http://www.allisonmccrady.com).



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Four Sunflowers by Pam Glover.

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BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 24

they shared a passion for organizing, and they decided to establish their own small business, Spiffy Chicks, to help people get organized to lead more efficient lives. They handle both residential and small business needs, with 80 percent of their clients being homeowners who need assistance getting rid of clutter.

“One thing that is really unique about



VALERIE HOTZ

**Dustie Robeson** and **Amy Berryhill** established Spiffy Chicks to help people get organized.

Spiffy Chicks is that we do projects together so we are in and out of people’s homes quickly. It gets worse before it gets better, and by working as a team, we can speed up the process. We can do it all day because it is fun for us. We enjoy helping people get organized,” explains Amy Berryhill.

Spiffy Chicks provides prospective clients with a questionnaire to be completed prior to the first meeting, in order to evaluate the client’s priorities and needs. This process allows the client to determine what it is about the project that he or she wants to see happen. Working as a team, the duo follows up with a 30 minute free consultation, which includes taking photos or videos that are utilized in devising a plan. “After creating a plan, we meet with the client and explain the plan thoroughly, including how many hours will be required in order to achieve it,” says Dustie Robeson. “We make

it a fun process so it is not overwhelming.” In some cases, a client may want to work side-by-side with Berryhill and Robeson, and in other situations, a client may want the kitchen done by the end of the day and leave it to the pair. They organize any room in the house, including toy rooms, offices and the kitchen. You name it, and Spiffy Chicks will handle it.

Spiffy Chicks implements a three-step process with every project. Firstly, every item is taken out of the space to be organized. Secondly, everything is sorted into like items and the excess is purged. “A client is able to keep what matters most to them, what enhances their lives and makes it better, and discard the rest,” adds Berryhill. Lastly, everything is put back in a system that is efficient for the client.

Previous to starting Spiffy Chicks, Robeson enjoyed a career in internal corporate communications, and Berryhill worked in the pharmaceutical industry. “My supervisor said I was good at creating order out of chaos. It has been a common thread throughout my career,” smiles Robeson. As mothers, they understand what family life is all about. Berryhill is married to commercial real estate developer Todd Berryhill, who also sits on the Orinda Planning Commission. The couple has two children who attend Glorietta School. Robeson is married to Mark Robeson, a banker with Wells Fargo, and the couple has three children that attend Los Perales School. Both women are active volunteers in their communities.

Spiffy Chicks will make your everyday living experience simplified so you have more time for the things that matter most in your life, like your children and your own life. “We help people with the process of just letting go of things that clutter their lives. Sometimes we find our clients want a fresh start, and we provide that for them,” says Berryhill.

For more information, visit the website at [www.spiffychicks.com](http://www.spiffychicks.com) or give them a call

at 925-699-5700. You can email Dustie at [dustie@spiffychicks.com](mailto:dustie@spiffychicks.com) or Amy at [amy@spiffychicks.com](mailto:amy@spiffychicks.com).

**Susan’s Silver Lining Designs Hospital Gowns to “Cover Your Assets”**

In February 2009, Susan Di Stefano was diagnosed with breast cancer and began the journey of seemingly endless medical appointments from her general practitioner to the oncologist, and then getting a second opinion, and all this before treatment was initiated. At one point, she was handed a faded, standard issue blue hospital gown with holes in it and instructed to undress and put it on with the opening in the back. “I refused to wear it and asked for another. I decided there had to be another way to go through this process without losing my individuality,” says Di Stefano.

Before her next appointment, Di Stefano took matters into her own hands. Taking her favorite soft flannel pajama top, she cut open the back and sewed in silk ribbon ties. Thinking ahead, Di Stefano made slits down the arms with Velcro closures in order to allow for the placement of an I.V. “I wore my custom pajama top and tights to



VALERIE HOTZ

**Susan Di Stefano**, owner of Susan’s Silver Lining, designs colorful hospital gowns.

my cancer surgery.” Thus was born Susan’s Silver Lining, a collection of comfortable and attractive hospital gowns available in 100 percent cotton and flannel. “I don’t like to be anonymous. The blue hospital gown makes a person blend into the hospital setting and into anonymity in the process. These colorful gowns are made in the Bay Area and are available in four sizes, small, medium, large and extra large. It is a won-

[SEE BUZZ 2 page 22]

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BUSINESS BUZZ

## Business Buzz Putting a Personal Face on Local Business

Valerie Hotz



To send items for consideration, email Hotz at v.hotz@att.net.

### Orinda Village Antiques Celebrates 30th Anniversary

It makes a lot of sense to shop Orinda this holiday season and with this in mind Susan Leach, owner of Orinda Village Antiques, suggests if you want to shop American, go to your local antique store where you will find incredible treasures. Not only will

you find decorative as well as functional items for entertaining and gift giving, a very knowledgeable Leach will also answer any questions you have on a wide range of antique topics. Walk through her shop, and you will be delighted with the thoughtful convenience of an antique dining table that can be expanded with an extra leaf when additional guests arrive, delightful porcelain tea cup collections, silver service and more.

"I conduct tea classes and over the years

have discovered people need help handling their own inventory. They inherit items and have no idea of the value. I encourage people to educate themselves. I enjoy helping them on their journey of learning," explains Leach, who was born in England and moved to Orinda as a child with her parents in 1949. She studied interior design in England and was an interior designer until starting her small business 30 years ago. "This is more fun. It is like Christmas all the time," smiles Leach, who encourages people to hunt for unique treasures and adopt an antique that will give pleasure making one's home one's own.

In addition to Taking Tea in the English Manner classes, Leach offers a one-on-one



VALERIE HOTZ

Susan Leach of Orinda Village Antiques has wonderful gift suggestions and also conducts tea classes.

private Silver Class which involves evaluating items. The fee structure is related to the number of items brought in for evaluation. "It is very important to know the value of silver pieces. Silver is made in different combinations of alloys and sterling in different parts of the world. It can be blended with nickel, copper or brass," says Leach, who holds all information confidential.

Leach's Taking Tea in the English Manner class is a delight for everyone, from 6 years of age to 105 years. Classes include 4-12 participants and may be organized around an occasion such as a Bridal or Baby Shower. Leach prepares assorted

sandwiches, delicious homemade scones, cakes and tarts and presents proper tea etiquette. "I am not a great chef by any means. These are simple foods that must be made with the freshest ingredients. The object is to learn how to use various implements and to enjoy the ritual of taking tea. For example, I use Swedish sugar tongs to serve fresh organic raspberries dusted with powdered sugar," explains Leach.

Leach is extremely knowledgeable about the history of the design of chairs and tables, among other things. She enjoys traveling and seeing how different cultures eat and have tea. She explains when human societies were able to establish more permanent residences, the first necessary piece of furniture was the bed. Later, when the luxury of being able to sit down at a table became a reality, chairs and tables were developed. Back in the 14th century the table was a functional work surface made of trestles and board. "You would never want to sit down at that table, considering the type of work that was done there. It was utilitarian and everything from plucking a chicken was done on that surface. Much of the day's work centered on gathering, preparing and presenting the meals. After the table was cleaned off, a tablecloth was used to cover up the work surface, which would otherwise be very unappetizing," explains Leach.

"I am very grateful for the wonderful customers I have," notes Leach. Orinda Village Antiques accepts items on consignment. Orinda Village Antiques is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. throughout the holidays. For more information, call 254-2206.

### Spiffy Chicks Offers Professional Organizing for Everyday Living

Orindan Amy Berryhill has been friends with Moragan Dustie Robeson for over 24 years. Three years ago the two realized [SEE BUZZ page 23]

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