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Season Starts with Sizzle!



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Photos Tod Fiermer

Diamon Simpson (20); Omar Samhan (50); Tron Smith (23)

Ship's Bell Tolls for Veterans Lost

By Jennifer Wake

Lamorinda has garnered national attention for its Lafayette crosses and the area has an abundance of conflicting opinions from its residents regarding the Iraq War. But with more than 5,000 veterans living in the Lamorinda area, Veterans Day continues to be a time of remembrance for its residents – for all the wars fought, all the courageous efforts made, and all the tears shed.

Retired Rear Admiral Vince Anzilotti, of Orinda, served in the Navy from 1948 to 1988. A naval aviator, he flew five different aircraft, has served aboard four Essex class aircraft carriers, and was decorated with the Legion of Merit. For the past seven years, he has helped coordinate a joint Mass among three Catholic parishes in Lamorinda each Veterans Day to honor local veterans who have made sacrifices for our country.

Each year at the Mass, which was held this year at St. Monica's Catholic Church in Moraga, a ship's bell rings out after names of veterans who have died in the past year are read. This solemn reading is followed by Taps.

"We're losing a lot of World War II vets," said Anzilotti, who was a naval aviator in both the Korean War and Vietnam Conflict. "What we're trying to do is have a Mass to remember."

Unlike past years where the Veteran's Day Mass was held as a separate event, this year's Mass was combined with one for young teens. This led to changes in the program: The St. Monica's Mass of the Rock teen band played God Bless America and America the Beautiful; the bagpipe solo of Amazing Grace was swapped for a guitar. The Mass offered a wonderful opportunity for the teens to learn more about these often unsung heroes.

"I hope the teens get an understanding that in our society here, a lot of us served in the military," Anzilotti said. "We're here and we should be respected for what we've done."

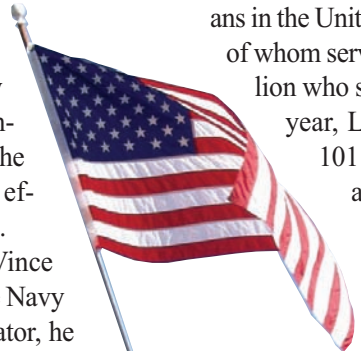
Bill Dick of Moraga – who was a Navy submariner during the Vietnam Conflict (and beyond) – has helped Anzilotti coordinate the Mass. "Vince has headed this thing up and brought so much to light," Dick said. "It's important to remember those that served their country gave us the rights and privileges we have

today – those same rights used by those who protest."

According to the Census Bureau, in 2000 there were more than 26 million veterans in the United States, (more than 8 million of whom served in Vietnam and over 4 million who served in Korea). In that same year, Lafayette had 2,152 male and 101 female resident civilian veterans, Moraga boasted 1,444 male and 43 female vets, and there were 1,846 males and 105 females living in Orinda who had served in the armed forces.

In the past, women veterans would collect the gifts at the Mass, but Anzilotti says they had trouble finding any who could do it this year. "They are just getting too old," he said.

For Dick, the Mass is an important way to remember those who served. "Between my dad, my uncles and myself, we had over 100 years of service in the Navy," he said. "I think many of those who were present served this country well over the years."



Retired Rear Admiral Vince Anzilotti holds ships bell at St. Monica's Photo Jennifer Wake

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Lamorinda Pow Wow

By Cathy Tyson

Was it excitement, or seismic activity that shook up attendees at the annual Tri-Cities Meeting where representatives of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda got together to summarize the highlights and lowlights of the past year? Civic leaders from City Council representatives, to Police Chiefs, to City Planners, to City Managers, gathered in Lafayette's new Veteran's Hall for the regional update. The expertise and devotion that these hard working civil servants have for their respective jobs and the community was apparent. All these people make it their jobs to enhance life in Lamorinda. Most residents aren't aware just how much effort goes into keeping Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda up and running.

The lengthy meeting covered a wide range of topics that affect the area. Emergency preparedness, an EBMUD road project and Lafayette planning were just a few of the many presentations that evening.

How appropriate was the first order of business on the agenda, Emergency Planning Progress Report? The Alum Rock temblor, literally rocked the meeting. No one panicked, although there was a parade of officials taking to the hallway with cell phone calls. The recently held tabletop exercises received excellent marks from outside consultants who remarked, "It was commendable the way they worked together."

It was apparent by the volume of concerned comments that EBMUD was in the hot seat, discussing the summer 2008 road closures for necessary water pipe replacements along Moraga Road. The fear was that when this project is coupled with the repaving of Moraga Way in Orinda, it could potentially be the mother of all traffic jams for area residents, especially those going into and out of Moraga. A consultant hired by EBMUD analyzed area traffic and projected less than 5% additional traffic on Moraga Way. Nora Harlow, Community Affairs Representative for EBMUD was reassuring, "we are building in flexibility, and will be able to adjust the project," just in case projected traffic scenarios are not what's anticipated.

"This has been an exciting year with projects in Lafayette," explained Niroop Srivatsa, Lafayette's Planning & Building Manager. The Woodbury, an 80-unit luxury condominium project will be build near the Veteran's Hall, a 20-unit project is slated to go up near the Lafayette Park Hotel on the other end of town, and the city is also partnering with an independent affordable senior housing company. Together the hope is to have 50-units of affordable senior housing. Whole Foods is coming to town and the Mercantile Building is almost complete.

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