

# Lamorinda Community, Calendar, Agendas, Notes, News

# Orinda

Calendar	
<b>City Council</b>	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Dec 4 (Tuesday, Nov 20 canceled)	
<b>Planning Comm.</b>	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Dec 11	
<b>Hist. Landmark Comm.</b>	3pm
Gallery Room, Upper Level 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Jan 22	
<b>Liaison</b>	8:30am
Community Room at City Hall 22 Orinda Way Monday, Dec 3	
check online: Town of Orinda: <a href="http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us/">http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us/</a> • all meeting notes • calendar updates	
Chamber of Commerce: <a href="http://www.orinda-chamber.org/">http://www.orinda-chamber.org/</a> • local businesses • upcoming events	



**Loaded Lacrosse Player, 11/17/07** An unknown St. Mary's student was banging on the door of a Lost Valley resident at 4:30 in the morning. Suspect was yelling, waving his arms, staggering and slurring his words. He was covered in leaves and had appeared to have urinated on himself. There was a Lacrosse party just down the street from the stunned resident that evening. Apparently Leaf-boy had been left behind. Clearly not able to care for himself, with a blood alcohol level of .24, three times the legal limit, police arrested him for public drunkenness.

**D.U.I., 11/16/07** Officers pulled over a vehicle going 50 m.p.h. in a 35 m.p.h. zone. The 34-year-old male driver had a strong odor of alcohol, showed signs of intoxication, and preformed poorly on field sobriety tests, a blotto trifecta. His blood alcohol level of .08 sealed the deal.

**Mail Thieves Busted, 11/09/07** Occupants of a suspicious vehicle were looking through mailboxes on El Toyonal. A records check showed the driver was on probation in Alameda County. The two male suspects, 25 and 26-years old respectively, were in possession of stolen property.

**Tampon Break In, 11/07/07** A 25-year old male had forced open a tampon machine at 4 Orinda Way. The suspect had been chased after being seen breaking into a car at the Orinda BART parking lot.

## Couturier Knock-off and Old World Values In Tact in Orinda

By Linda U. Foley



Johanna Behrsing

Photo Linda U. Foley

Any woman who's done any 'serious' shopping or "Vogue" reading and knows her Givenchy from Dior, also knows that glamour and timelessness hinge not merely on gorgeous quality fabrics but on the details. No one lays better claim to this than the French.

A mutual friend had arranged a coffee klatsch recently with Johanna Behrsing in Orinda. We are all native Germans—from Schleswig Holstein to Bavaria—and appreciated the opportunity to share homemade poppy seed cake, whipped cream, fragrant coffee and learning about Johanna's voyage to becoming a master seamstress, a profession lost to mass production today and the dictates of the current fads.

Johanna lovingly unfolds her French 'knock-off,' which she created—more than 45 years ago—copying the dress from a Vogue magazine as a seamstress apprentice.

Each of us has memories of the value of handmade clothing; the seamstress coming to the house, an elder's heavy coat or silk dress retailored for oneself and drew comparisons to what is available in stores today. We also recalled how handmade things endured forever. And—being raised not to discard anything that was perfectly good—that durability and timelessness were not always appreciated by the younger generation.

Surrounded by many artifacts from her girlhood in the Black Forest, Johanna wove her personal history.

In post war Germany, families in her rural area sent their daughters to the county seat to learn sewing in order to enable them to make their own clothing and earn their livelihood. After mastering the basics, several of the best students were selected to stay on as apprentices. At the conclusion of her apprenticeship, Johanna had to pass an arduous

test, which included a Gesellenrock or apprentice skirt.

The grey wool fabric was spread before us on the table purveying in exacting detail every intricacy of skilled sewing: hidden seams, reversible pockets and lapels, handmade buttonholes, kick pleats, cording, concealed zippers, embroidery and not a pucker, pull or bulge in sight. Not even hinting on its reversibility, the same perfection was seen as she flipped the piece over.

Johanna said, "I was so fearful of my instructor. She would just tear the seams open if they looked even slightly bumpy, and we had to redo it all painstakingly."

Sandwiched between three years of apprenticeship and six months of Meisterschule in Stuttgart—which would include designing ensembles and rudimentaries of business management—Johanna was required to work five years in various salons. "Once a client brought in for alteration a beautiful skirt she'd bought in Paris. The owner of the salon was so fascinated with the skirt—as no one knows sewing and style as well as the French—that she had us take it completely apart to copy the pattern."

To finally earn her master's seamstress diploma, eight years of fine honing culminated in a one-week 'sewing marathon' under the watchful eyes of the judges situated on the periphery of the room. "The finale was a Modenschau or fashion show and we had to model our work ourselves. It was nerve wrack-

ing." The mere memory colored her cheeks pink.

Johanna worked in her profession until she got married and moved to California in the mid 60's.

Infused by the romp through memories and our interest, Johanna brought out her great-great-grandfather's linen shirt reminiscent of a cossack's. It is in perfect condition and white as a commercial. Johanna's hands caressed the lace neckband, which is handmade as is all the fabric. "For the cost of her meals, a woman would spend the winters at my great-grandparents home, spinning," added Johanna. In the corner of the room, next to her grandmother's wardrobe, sat the silent historian—the spinning wheel.

Johanna brought out her grandfather's sheep fur-lined hat, her mother's going-to-church black silk apron—now a hand-

some pillow—black crocheted scarves, the water kettle that used to hang inside the wood stove.

The enlarged photos on the walls enhanced Johanna's recollections of another time. Solemn black and white relatives sitting in front of sepia doors, on benches next to thick wood piles, chickens pecking. A hint of forest in the distance.

As she held up her Goldenrod colored "knock-off," the timelessness of Audrey Hepburn came to mind in Breakfast at Tiffany's. Simple lines, pleats, styling achieved with great knowledge and care.

We all reached for our personal historical details and understood. The afternoon nodded toward the end. We said our goodbyes, happy to know that the past, the skills and history are tangible parts of the present—it's all in the details.

## 'zAthlete' Gaining Popularity Among Lamorinda Youth

By David Anderson

The recent popularity of online networking websites has yielded a new creation targeting athletes and fans. According to a recent press release, 'zAthlete' (a product of Orinda-based In-traware) aims to provide exposure for athletes by enabling users to share video, pictures, statistics and more.

The website provides a 21st century approach to recruiting athletes across the nation featuring a familiar user setup reminiscent of other online networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace. Members utilize a profile page in which they can post their statistics and upload pictures and video highlights. Coaches, fans and athletes are able to browse through picture and video albums, send messages and compare stats.

Launched in October, the potential for 'zAthlete' to succeed in providing exposure for athletes is high. The success of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace lies in their ability to connect people all over the world. There is room for this site to succeed as well if 'zAthlete' can successfully connect athletes with coaches and recruiters at the college and professional level.

"I think it'll help a lot (with

recruiting)," says Kimberly Sanguinetti, a senior member of the DFAL Champion Miramonte Women's Water Polo team. "There are a lot of schools that aren't as well known as (Miramonte) so I think that a lot of athletes in the Bay Area and all over the United States can get recognized pretty easily. The website is growing a lot. More and more people are getting 'z pages'."

Athletes throughout Lamorinda seem to be on the same page about the potential benefits of 'zAthlete.' Andrew Wood, a freshman Rugby player at St. Mary's College adds, "There's no way to really get noticed unless your coach gets you noticed or someone comes to your game and sees you. So having something like (zAthlete) would be really helpful."

Due to the website's status as a "beta version" (meaning the current website is not the final version) it is still somewhat rough. The overall aesthetics of the site, for example, are simplistic and the section designated for members to post blogs is still under construction.

Although finishing touches are still being made, 'zAthlete' is serving its purpose quite well. The site provides a space for members to post athletic achievements and does so while accepting high quality pictures and videos of any size. To view the website, go to [www.zathlete.com](http://www.zathlete.com). Members must have a valid email address and be at least thirteen years old to sign up.



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