

Lamorinda Community

Calendar, Notes, News

Orinda

Calendar	
City Council	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Jan 29	
Planning Comm.	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Feb 12	
Hist. Landmark Comm.	3pm
Gallery Room, Upper Level 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Feb 26	
Planning Process Review	8:30am
Community Room at City Hall 22 Orinda Way Friday, Feb 1	
Mayor's Com. Liaison	9am
Community Room at City Hall 22 Orinda Way Monday, Feb 4	

check online:
Town of Orinda:
<http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us/>
• all meeting notes
• calendar updates

Chamber of Commerce:
<http://www.orindachamber.org/>
• local businesses
• upcoming events



Bev Mo Burglary, 1/16/08
Two women came into the store with a large black bag and took some liquor without paying for it. They left in a Nissan Stanza. Police stopped the vehicle and found three large bottles of tequila along with the black bag.

Attempted scam, 1/14/08 A 56 year old Orinda resident had received e-mails from A & E Textile Company offering part time employment. All the potential victim had to do was receive profits from products purchased in the U.S. and deposit the money in a bank account, then forward the profits less 10% to A & E in the U.K. The non-victim received several money orders for \$820. payable to her, which turned out to be fraudulent.

Parking while drunk, 1/11/08 A Van Ripper Lane resident was suspected to be driving drunk in the Happy Valley area. Officers contacted him at his home, where he preformed poorly on field sobriety tests and showed a .25 blood alcohol level, more than three times the legal limit. Despite the fact that his car was in the garage, he was arrested for driving under the influence.

Theft, 1/11/08 An unknown person removed a DMV disabled placard from the front seat of an unlocked vehicle that was parked at the Village Pizza parking lot.

Download stories at
<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com>
(a pdf reader is required to view the pages.)

A Blinding Flash Can't Clear Away Clutter

By Dorothy Bowen

By now, most New Year's resolutions have passed their sell-by dates. I have, however, made a small step forward in my annual get-organized-and-eliminate-clutter-resolve.

The stores have been full of plastic bins and wicker baskets for containing things which can be contained. Helpful articles abound about how to sort through and organize clutter, giving the illusion that it is indeed possible. If only it were that easy.

I should be farther along, I realize, since I experienced an epiphany of sorts some

years ago. It happened this way:

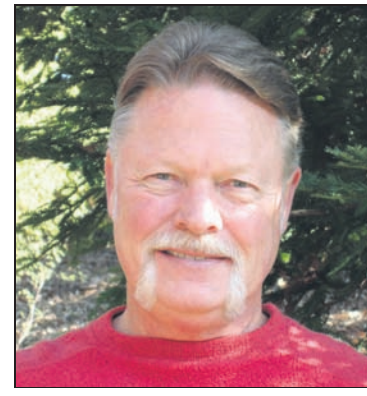
I had tracked down the whereabouts of a Lamorinda pioneer, Gertrude Malette, the owner of the Moraga ranch house, since 1916, that became the estate of developer Donald Rheen, since 1934, then the abode of the Christian Brothers, 1961, and then the Moraga Hacienda de las Flores in 1973.

When I say tracked down, implying relentless research into the past, it was more like falling into a gold mine by accident.

Members of local historical societies heard of Malette

from the late Brother Dennis, Saint Mary's College archivist. She and her partner, Alberta Higgins, bought a property with a modest adobe ranch house, 20 acres that was once part of Rancho Laguna de las Palos Colorados. They planned to raise Irish setters and orphans. But the social services of the day refused to let two single women become foster parents, so that never happened.

Malette was the author of children's books and a cultivated woman who spoke French, among her other accomplishments. Higgins was a



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nurse. Local ranchers said the two women could take a tractor apart and put it back together in no time flat.

On Christmas Eve, 1935, they left the property purchased by Donald Rheen. He added a second story, a swimming pool complete with columns and a film screening room a la Hearst Castle.

"One wonders what he needed all those bedrooms for," sniffed Malette, in a later interview.

Years went by. A neighbor on South Trail, in Orinda, told me about another neighbor, a woman in her 80s, who split logs for her wood-burning stove in the summer cottage where she lived. Her name rang a bell: Gertrude Malette. Unfortunately, she had

been felled by a stroke and hospitalized, but she was anxious to move back into her cottage.

At the same time, Vietnamese refugees were coming here, sponsored by Saint Mary's College. They spoke French. She spoke French. They needed a home. She needed help. A perfect fit, I thought. We arranged a meeting for the families at Malette's cottage on La Madronal, on the side of a canyon surrounded by oak trees.

When we opened the front door, I began to suspect that what seemed like a perfect solution might not be. She had kept an extended family of cats, and though they were gone, their aroma remained.

continued on page 7

Caution: Crooked Tree Trimmers at Work

By Cathy Tyson



Orinda residents beware; an unscrupulous tree trimming service has been active in and around Orinda. Especially after the recent storms, many residents have trees large and small strewn or dangling around their property.

Although seeming legitimate, many locals have fallen for their solicitations and their rock bottom prices. Brian Gates, Owner of Expert Tree Service, who has been in business for 30 years and is a member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce said, "It's impossible to run a legitimate tree service for less than \$50 per man/hour. There is just no way to pay for the insurance, trucks, certification and equipment for less than that."

An illegitimate tree service might come in at \$15 to \$20 dollars per hour, but they probably don't have any workers compensation insurance or the required Line Clearance Certificate, not to mention experi-

ence. A Line Clearance Certificate is required when working within 10 feet of any kind of power line. "The two leading causes of death among tree trimmers were electrocutions and falls," according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. In the unfortunate event of an accident the homeowner is completely liable for injury that occurs to a worker and for all the damage caused.

"Local consumers can have such a laissez-faire attitude, knowing that they have benefits and insurance from their jobs, but when they get a substantially lower bid, it's so easy to look the other way, and forget about the huge exposure they open themselves to and lack of insurance," opined Gates.

One particular company that has five salesmen working the area, claims zero employees on their Contractor's License, which is easily

accessible from the Contractors State License Board website (see sidebar) and pays no workers compensation. It is unknown whether they are following all of the OSHA regulations relevant to tree trimming.

Caveat emptor.

What to look for when hiring a tree service:

1. Check the Contractors State License Board at www.cslb.ca.gov to get status of contractor's license, by clicking on "check a license." Towards the bottom of the Contract' License Detail page, workers compensation status is listed along with required contractor's bond.
2. Demand and save an insurance certificate from the carrier, not the service provider.
3. Make sure they have property liability insurance to protect you and workers compensation insurance for all employees to protect you and the worker.
4. Make sure they have the required Line Clearance Certificate to work around electrical conductors, power lines, guy wires and telephone poles.
5. Make sure they have a Certified Arborist on staff so they know when and how to trim your trees. For example, Monterey Pines trimmed in the summer months will die.
6. Make sure they wear the required safety equipment, hard hat and safety glasses.

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