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## Life in LAMORINDA

### A "Miracle" for Lamorindans

By Cathy Tyson



Tom Flynn as Kris Kringle and Catherine Hayes as Susan in Town Hall Theatre Company's Miracle On 34th Street Photo by Stu Stelland

It's been over sixty years since the film version of "Miracle on 34th Street" came out. Clearly the world is a different place. But themes of suspending disbelief and kindness still resonate in this classic holiday production. The adaptation by Patricia Di Benedetto Snyder, Will Severin and John Vreeke parallels the original novel by Valentine Davis. There is def-

initely a feeling of stepping back in time, from the hair styles to the music.

Single mom and Macy's employee Doris Walker, played seamlessly by Beth Deitchman, is required to find a new Santa at the last minute for the Thanksgiving Day Parade. Newly hired Santa, Tom Flynn, a dead ringer for the man in red, is a huge hit, but all business Doris has reservations

that Mr. Kringle has reindeer on the brain upon his insistence that he really is Santa Claus. Who couldn't fall in love with Fred Galley, played by Timothy Redmond as nice-guy lawyer and Doris' neighbor/love interest?

Although some of the dialog feels circa 1947, there are some wonderful lines. With a hearty chuckle Santa answers the question of how old he is with, "as old as my tongue and little bit older than my teeth."

In supporting roles, hilarious Lauren Rosi is a scene stealer as Miss Adams, Barbara Cecchetti takes on four roles, and does a convincing job with her primary part as a neurotic psychologist.

In her directorial debut at Town Hall Theatre, Jessica Richards manages to keep the ambitious assortment of actors together. In this adaptation, the play is similar to the film, so the real challenge is the distracting set switches that squeeze a total of thirty-three scenes into the two-hour production with the help of semi-stealthy elves.

"Miracle on 34th Street is a compelling story about Christmas

spirit in the real world," says Jessica Richard, director. "What I love about Kris Kringle, Doris & Susan Walker, Fred Gailey, and all the characters in this play is that they are regular people wrestling with the questions of belief and compassion the same way we might be today. The discovery of Christmas spirit in themselves and others is timeless enough that it still inspires people year after year."

"When I first took over as Artistic Director of Town Hall Theatre I wanted to bring fresh directorial visions to our audience and the first person I thought of was Jessica Richards," says Clive Worsley, Artistic Director. "The spirit of humanity and compassion that is embodied in the character of Kris Kringle is something we can all aspire to, not just during the holidays."

Show runs through December 24, Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00, Sunday matinees at 2:00. Additional shows Saturday and Sunday the 20th and 21st and Tuesday and Wednesday the 23rd and 24th. For tickets call (925) 283-1557 or go to www.townhalltheatre.com.

### A Young Parks and Recreation Director Reaches Out To The Community

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Ingram's vision of his department is a group that works in synergy with stakeholders: the K-12 schools, Saint Mary's College, the Moraga Movers (age 55+), the Park and Recreation Foundation and others. "I have met people and groups in town, and this has been very productive," says Ingram. "For example, as a result of a renewed relationship with Saint Mary's College, the two institutions will offer sports camps for the winter and spring breaks. The Town Crier, that includes the Activities Guide, will

also present all of the campus games and a Saint Mary's student is starting an internship to work on the Triathlon marketing plan and volunteer recruitment."

The Moraga School District is an important partner for Ingram as well. Joint meetings have been taking place to start talking about a multi-generational community center. At study as well is a synthetic turf field. Ingram has met with Rheem Elementary and is looking into enrichment classes such as karate, hip-hop, dancing and yoga.

"I have been included in C.O.R.E. meeting with all the PTAs, MEF and the District staff," adds Ingram.

Big on the future agenda of the Director is the Hacienda de las Flores. At this time, the rental rates are appropriate for large functions such as weddings, but are out of reach for family events or Girl Scout troops. Ingram wants to have a different rental format for family events so residents can use the beautiful historic building to celebrate birthdays or host a family type function. "The Council will make the decision,"

says Ingram, "but that's what I will recommend so the Hacienda serves our community better."

Ingram's enthusiasm and optimism stays high, he want the residents to consider the Parks and Rec when making their leisure choices. "The relationships we are creating are starting to flourish; it is to the benefit of all the Moraga residents," he concludes.

### Coach Ken Nelson Remembered and Honored

By Robin Schoettler Fox

It almost doesn't matter who you ask - player, coach, or parent -- the answers sound the same: Ken Nelson was a mellow coach, not a typical sideline yeller, the kind of coach who encouraged team play, who was in it for the kids and had no personal agenda.

That alone is cause to applaud in today's competitive youth basketball world. But it doesn't put a moniker on a tournament as well respected as the long standing Campolindo Freshman Tournament, renamed the Ken Nelson Invitational after Coach Nelson succumbed to cancer in late November.

Coach Nelson's story is about reach, a coach's long-term influence on the local youth basketball landscape.

"The umbrella is huge," says Matt Watson, Campolindo's Varsity Coach, adding that the age range of those who've played for Nelson spans from current 3rd graders to men approaching 30.

"(Coach Nelson) was a per-

son who put a lot of his time and life in support of basketball," says Zach Kisner, one of St. Perpetua's (St. P's) 7th grade Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) players Coach Nelson planned to coach this season, having taken them to the Diocese Championships last year.

In box-scores of youth basketball, Coach Nelson's numbers are impressive, just looking at years with different basketball programs: St. P's CYO, 21 years; Flight Elite, 8 years; Diablo Warriors, 7 years; Acalanes, 1 year; Campolindo, 3 years - this was to be his 4th.

"You would be hard pressed to find many kids playing (local) high school basketball who weren't either coached by Ken or played in one of his programs," says Phil Doherty, who first met Nelson in 1987 at their sons' 3rd grade CYO tryout. Initially, Doherty coached alone. Within a month Nelson joined him, becoming "Coach" for the first time, a

name he proudly owned until the day he died, having coached his final game just a month earlier.

The days of winter-only basketball are over. Club teams play year round. So do high schools. Serious CYO teams join off-season leagues. Yet Coach Nelson rarely took a team off his clipboard, continuing to coach CYO even after he and Doherty started the year round Diablo Warriors program.

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### "Try Lafayette First!" Kicks Off in Unity and Uniform

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"Before you go anywhere else, try Lafayette first," urged Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Officer Jay Lifson. He invited all business owners to recommend another local business to their neighbors. "It is vital," he added, "in a small community like ours we need to know and support one another."

"I am here even if we do not have a store front," said Tamara Selvig of David Selvig Construc-

tion, "(because) in tough times we need to support each other and recommend our fellow businesses to our constituencies."

"For the people in town there is value added to shopping locally; our town depends on sales tax revenue, we all want a lively and vibrant downtown, everybody is in this together," said Chamber Board President Larry Duson, "we are a family and all participate."

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