

Lamorinda Community

Rancho Laguna Project Moved Forward

The other concern is with the creek that runs along the property. The developer proposes to fill up the existing creek, and re-engineer a new one that, according to him, would be more efficient. A benefit would be to stabilize the very unsafe Rheem Boulevard for a fraction of the cost of the other solution: a long retaining wall. But, as Whitley pointed out, it would still destroy a natural water way.

In 2006, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board wrote, "the Water Board has serious reservations about the ability of the Project Sponsor to mitigate for the magnitude of such losses (creek and riparian corridor)... Further, we do not support the concept of creating a water course on top of engineered fill in the manner proposed by the Project Sponsor due to the high risk

... continued from page 3

of failure and potential for downstream water quality impacts."

Planning Commissioner Allison Daniels reminded the commission that the valley buttress needed the approval of the Department of Fish and Game and that if declined, the only option left for fixing Rheem Boulevard would be a retaining wall. That option had been priced at around \$3 million by Town Engineer Jill Mercurio, and the Rancho Laguna developer has only agreed to pay less than a quarter of it.

These elements were not sufficient to stop the Commission from approving the project, but they are the basis of the appeal filed on August 27 by a group of 30 residents. The Town Council should hear the matter at its regular meeting on September 23rd.

Wanted: Enchanting Art for New Library

... continued from page 2

Prime wall space has been saved for a number of large and small pieces, up to 4' x 5', there's also wall real estate that can accommodate a 6' x 6' piece, a spot for a freestanding sculpture and suspended work - interested artists should check the Call for Entry for specific requirements. Only professional artists who live or work in the Bay Area are eligible, those from Lafayette will receive an extra preference point in the selection process.

Judging will be based on artistic excellence, innovation and creativity, appropriateness for the library setting, and long term maintenance needs. Oakland Museum staff will pre-screen all submissions, then a panel composed of a variety of art professionals, community members, design team members, City staff and the Library Public Art Committee will review images of pieces that made the original cut.

Deadline for submission of required materials is 5:00 p.m. next Friday, September 11. Installation of the winners is scheduled for October 16, in plenty of time for the upcoming "Create a Novel Evening" Gala event on November 7 as well as the "Celebrate a Place" Grand Opening on November 14. For more information, go to www.lovelafayette.org

Life in LAMORINDA

A Fumble Fingers Farewell

By Glenn Nosse



Elfie Pingree shows Cooper a rock with animal features



Photos Glenn Nosse Kay Aaker and grandson, Cooper look-over the collection

In a tiny shack, by today's commercial standards, time stopped on a beautiful August Sunday. A fifty-year old original, Fumble Fingers, closed its doors and said goodbye.

"How sad, generations have come by with their kids, saying they remember stopping by when they were kids," says Nancy Guth, the daughter of the original rock hound, Aaron Pingree, Fingers' founder.

Aaron and Elfie Pingree first opened a fly-fishing store, "launched with \$800 in 1960," says Guth. "Dad switched to rocks after realizing that fly-fishing stopped flying, back in the early 60's."

Pingree started as a tomato farmer with three acres at the end of Acalanes Road, switching to fish at forty years old following a heart attack. "Dad never stopped learning and exploring, up to the day he died last year," recalls Guth. "I can re-

member measuring grit and polish and bagging them for customers at eleven years old." That was in the Cresco building on Mount Diablo Boulevard, shared with two other businesses in 1960.

An endless line of rock fans like Sleepy Hollow third grade teacher Kay Aaker and her grandson, Cooper Smith, stopped to say farewell and pick-over what was left. "The manipulative and tactile aspects in a place like this is how children learn and remember, better than pictures. I used this place many times for my classes," said Aaker. "I see a platypus in this one," says Cooper, a second-grader at Happy Valley Elementary.

Elfie Pingree, still sharp and with a big smile, balks at shaking hands because she feels hers are dirty. Guth says Mom always sees animal faces in the rocks while she (Guth) sees landscapes, memories of rock hunts all over the world, and

old customers and characters even more interesting than the rocks.

The name "Fumble Fingers" stuck when, over breakfast one morning fifty years ago, Guth says Dad would fumble over the plates and silver as he lost the feeling in his hands from years of working his tomato fields. A verse from an old poem, yellowed and tacked to the wall, said it all:

*A rockhound is truly a person apart
His pleasures are simple and few*

*He will pound on a ledge in the blazing sun
Or dig when his fingers are blue*

Elfie Pingree and daughter Nancy Guth are looking for storage space for the unsold rocks. Their shop, on Brown Ave. in Lafayette, is for sale.

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*\$5 off, 1 per person, no min order, no take out, age 65 or older, exp. Sept. 18th

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SMC Fall Reading Series Features Local Talent

By Andrea A. Firth

"We have a full lineup of Bay Area writers—poets, memoirists, and fiction writers—who, taken together, demonstrate how deep our local literary waters run," states Marilyn Abildskov, the director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at Saint Mary's College (SMC) which organizes the Creative Writing Reading Series. "To go to the readings, which are all free, is like spending a night in city but without the hassle of having to get yourself to the city," she adds.

Among the writers on the Fall Reading Series roster is Rachel Howard, a former dance correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle turned novelist, whose memoir *The Lost Night* delves into the unsolved murder of her father in the family's home when she was 10-years old. "I was really haunted by what happened to my dad," says Howard. "My real drive [to write the book] was to make some understanding of what little facts I had." While Howard was not able to solve the mysteries surrounding her father's death, she was able to bring it to a resolution. "If you are writing your own story, even with parts that are unresolved, eventually the writing catches up with the living, and you truly get to write your own ending," says Howard.

Jack Marshall, a well-known Bay-area poet and memoirist, will

also read at SMC later in September. "I recently read Jack Marshall's memoir, *From Baghdad to Brooklyn: Growing Up in a Jewish Arabic Family in Midcentury America*, and was struck by its beauty," says Abildskov. "His is a poet's memoir—a lyrical and loving picture of growing up in a Jewish-Arabic family in Brooklyn. He captures a time and mindset that has all but disappeared..." Marshall is the son of an Iraqi father and Syrian mother. "[In writing the memoir] I enjoyed giving into those memories and making them come alive," says Marshall. "It gave me more compassion for my mother, and my father, and their situation."

The readings, held at the Soda Activity Center at SMC on select Wednesday evenings, last about an hour and include a question and answer session with the author. "Most of us like to stay in to watch TV on weeknights, which I totally understand," notes Abildskov, but she adds, "Going to a reading is like putting your head down on your desk the way you did in grade school for story time. It's completely alluring and wholly seductive, losing yourself in language and story."

SMC 2009 Fall Creative Writing Reading Series

Readings are held on Wednesdays in the Soda Activity Center and start at 7:30 p.m.

Matthew Zapruder
September 9—A poet, translator, and editor, Zapruder teaches in the low-residency program at UC-Riverside-Palm Desert.

Rachel Howard
September 23—Howard is the author of *The Lost Night*, a memoir about the emotional aftermath of her father's unsolved murder.

Jack Marshall
September 30—Marshall is the author of several collections of poetry, the memoir *From Baghdad to Brooklyn: Growing Up in a Jewish Arabic Family in Midcentury America*, and his latest book *The Steel Veil*.

Chris Abani
October 14—A poet and novelist whose books include *The Virgin of Flames*, *Hands Washing Water*, *Daphne's Lot*, and *GraceLand*. Abani is a professor at the University of California Riverside

Susan Steinberg
October 28—The author of the short story collections *The End of Free Love* and *Hydroplane*, Steinberg currently teaches at the University of San Francisco.

Rebecca Wolff
November 11—Wolff's books of poems include the award-winners *Manderley*, *Figment*, and *The King*.

MOFD Board Selects Stakeholder Group to Interview Fire Chief Candidates

... continued from page 1

In 2006, MOFD commissioned Deccan International, a company that offers analysis software services specifically for Fire and EMS departments, to perform a standards of coverage study to be used as an assessment tool. The resulting study, according to the Nowicki, was used to evaluate community risk, response times, utilization of resources, development impact and recommended performance objectives. This report, he added, is available to the public.

The Board noted that the raw data is public information and available to whomever asks, however, the software from Deccan is proprietary and anyone wishing to use the program would need to contract with Deccan independently.

Cohn said that once he receives the data, FAIR will present the data to the City of Orinda in the hopes the city will conduct its own assessment.

According to Cohn, FAIR is a group of citizens which has been

encouraging the Orinda City Council to perform a study of MOFD to determine if it can operate at a lower cost, thus freeing up tax revenue. Cohn adds that the group's members are all constituents of MOFD and the City of Orinda and include several people who have served or are serving on boards and commissions in Orinda. Cohn says the group has over 40 members and includes Al Resnick, Keith Jacobson, Heather Dunne, Alex Evans, Sandy Gross, Diane Stephens and Bill Schmicker.

Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Recruitment Stakeholder Interview Panel

Fire Chiefs:
Rich Price - San Ramon Valley Fire District
Gerald Simon - Oakland Fire Department
John Ross - Contra Costa County Fire District
Chris Gray - San Rafael Fire Department

Police Chief:
Robert Priebe - Moraga

Internal Team:
Battalion Chief Maxwell
Captain Steve Rodgers
Financial Manager Susan Casey
Administrative Assistant Christine Pokorny
Local 1230 Felipe Barreto
Fire Marshal Mike Mentink

Community Members:
John Banelos - Orinda resident and member of Orinda's Financial Advisory Committee
Gene Gottfried - Orinda resident and former MOFD Board Member
Richard Olsen - Moraga resident and former Moraga Fire Commissioner
Janet Keeter - Orinda City Manager
Sue Severson - Mayor of Orinda
Mike Segrest - Moraga Town Manager
Karen Mendonca - Moraga Council Member
Jonathan Goodwin - Canyon Fire Council
Gordon Nathan - Moraga resident and former MOFD Board Member
Vince Maiorana - Orinda resident