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# Hercules Saves Christmas in Orinda

By Cathy Dausman



Mackenzie Phillips, Hercules and Max dog, a boy, and Christmas—what's not to like? The mighty combination is working well for producers Derek Zemrak and Leonard Pirkle as they prepare to unleash the red carpet World Premier of *Hercules Saves Christmas* November 17 at the Orinda Theatre.

The movie was shot last winter in Lamorinda (<http://tinyurl.com/3w6pcju>) with a local supporting cast and film crew. It features Animal Planet's *Pit Boss* dog star Hercules. Human actors include Mackenzie Phillips, Danny Arroyo, Kathy Garver, Maggie Vandenberghe and Richard Van Vleet. Hercules' film voice belongs to owner Shorty Rossi, who has a cameo role as a priest in the film. Zemrak says the most difficult part of production was accommodating Rossi's schedule.

The story idea came about while the two were attending another premier in Hawaii. The script: orphan Max (played by South Bay local An-

thony Robinson) meets a talking dog (Hercules) who works for Santa. Max and Hercules go to San Francisco, where they encounter a pack of toy-stealing dogs and evil humans. Only Max can see Hercules, and Hercules can only speak when wearing his magic collar. Add some elves to the magic, stir in comedy and suspense, and you've got a movie Animal Planet has already snapped up (it airs December 3).

Photos provided Celebrities arrive at 6:30 p.m.; the movie premier at 7:00 p.m., with a Q&A to follow. *Hercules* then moves to Moraga's New Rheem Theatre, where it will play for a week. The movie's trailer is available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leqDNpmfYdU>. Dog, elf and Christmas lovers will be delighted to know Zemrak's already thinking ahead to a sequel.



Dana Michael Woods (background: Anthony Robinson as "Max")

# Charismatic Author Impresses Audience

By Cathy Tyson



Author Glen David Gold at Lamorinda Reads event with pooch, Cocoa Photo Cathy Tyson

Glen David Gold charmed an audience of fans of his book, *Carter Beats the Devil* at the finale of this year's Lamorinda Reads season at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. The engaging, likeable author couldn't have been more down to earth, illustrating his journey toward completing the book with lots of colorful, juicy details.

"They said make yourself at home, so I brought my dog," said Gold as he first reached the podium. The well behaved, rather large Cocoa just hung out on his leash, napping at times.

Right off the bat he confessed to plagiarizing a story about a goldfish when he was three. Continuing the

brutally honest trend were four self-described "very bad" novels in a row starting at twenty-three. "I had been mistaking clever for genius," said Gold. *Carter Beats the Devil* was born at the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program at UC Irvine when he was in his early thirties. He got off to an encouraging start sharing the first paragraph and early chapters with a very supportive Graduate Writer's Workshop at the MFA program. It wasn't all smooth sailing for the lengthy historical fiction novel however, at one point he took an eighteen month hiatus. He followed that with a job as a receptionist, from which he was fired. Once finally complete, his publication date was September 11, 2001.

The film rights for the story have also had a slightly bumpy ride: first optioned by Tom Cruise, then AMC –The American Movie Channel, then Warner Brothers. Gold reported he just had a phone call the other day that Warner had renewed their option. Since *Carter*, Gold has published a novel, *Sunnyside*, numerous short stories, and screenplays. He'll be teaching at the MFA program at UC Irvine in the spring.

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