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93 Moraga Way, Orinda

## Civic News Moraga, Orinda

### New Sports Field at Camino Pablo Elementary

By Sophie Braccini



Students help to cut the ribbon

Photo Cathy Dausman

The bell rang at 10:55 a.m. on Thursday, December 8. Like a flock of birds taking over a newly-seeded field, the children of Camino Pablo Elementary (CP) in Moraga ran running and screaming, on that crisp and bright morning, across the new sports field. The grass took it well.

Officials from the Town of Moraga, the School District and the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) looked on in delight – they had just finished an inauguration ceremony for the new field.

“What is nice about this field

is that it can be used in different configurations for different sports,” said Harry Crouch, Park and Recreation Commissioner and LMYA parent. The field at CP had ceased to be a viable alternative for sports team in the area, which are always hungry for good practice surfaces, due to drainage and grass quality issues.

The complete renovation of the field cost the Town of Moraga over half a million dollars. It was made possible by a Measure WW grant; the bond measure was approved in 2008 by residents of Contra Costa and is administered and redistributed by the EBRPD.

“We are thrilled that the renovation went so well,” said Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns, “this cooperative project with the Town went very well and we’d like to see more.” The Town Council decides on the use of Measure WW money, which must go toward parks and recreation. The choice of renovating the School District’s property was made because it seemed the best way to serve the recreation needs of the community.

About \$100,000 remains of the bond allocation to fund other recreation projects in Moraga.

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### History Warms Hearts, Spurs Smiles

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The vanilla ice cream, which was donated for the evening’s dinner and is Loard’s main staple, is used in everything from sundaes to single scoop cones.

“That’s the real deal,” Brad announced as wait staff rolled out carts with dishes of vanilla ice cream.

#### Orinda Theatre – Heart and History

Opened by Donald Rheem on December 27, 1941, nearly three weeks to the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Orinda Theatre quickly became the gathering place for a community worried and wearied by World War II. News reels that were shown with movies of the time offered both reality and respite. Saved from demolition in the mid-1980s, the theater retains the original art deco touches of architect Alexander Aimwell Cantin.

Three of the Theatre’s former ushers, Colette Kersten, Malia Martin, and Shellie Abbes Kirby, remembered special times spent there, prompting laughter and broad smiles from audience members.

Abbes Kirby, now a realtor associate with Coldwell Banker

in Orinda, started at the theater in 1966 as high school freshman. Tickets were \$1.35 for adults and 35 cents for kids during her tenure, which lasted until 1971.

“We were called usherettes,” she said. “We really worked for our money.” Her dad, Frank Martin, made the “Coming Soon” fixtures in the theater that are still familiar to today’s audiences.

“You Only Live Twice,” “Valley of the Dolls,” “The Graduate,” and “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” were favored flics back then.

Kersten held the prized job of ticket taker, helping late arrivals find their seats with the help of her trusty flashlight. Describing the usherettes’ uniforms and Go Go boots, she also recalled an unwritten rule – friends of the usherettes were permitted to snag free popcorn and Cokes.

“I was so impressed by the art,” she said. Now an Energy Advisor with the California Public Utilities Commission, Kersten avidly collects Orinda Theatre memorabilia. “To this day, I can see the marquee outside my window.”

“The whole place is a work of art,” said Martin, part of the Santa Maria school’s first graduating class and now owner of the licensed Orinda daycare, Baby Central. Calling the bathrooms “a whole other social experience,” she described how high school girls would watch each other put on makeup from the sitting room area of the women’s restroom. “I love the fact that the same chairs are still there. I’m so glad they have preserved that.”

Kersten mused that she took up skiing after seeing “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service,” and inspired a few head nods as she said, “I think I saw Woodstock probably 20 times.”

Multiple members of the audience offered their own choice memories, including clues to the theater areas designated by teens – and maybe a few adults over the years – as “make-out sections.”

As audience members gradually filtered out, many remained behind swapping stories. Afterward, Williams commented that the evening had been one of the Society’s most successful activities presented to date.

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