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Preserving a Community Gem - The Legend of Sleepy Hollow Continues

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In the March 1955 *Oakland Tribune* article, "Sleepy Hollow Purchases Land for Recreation," Starkman called their efforts "the first step in a program to create a spot, close to home, where the children can plan and swim in safety, and mom and dad can relax in peace."

It was clear that, even then, Orinda moms and dads were already dreaming of future glory. The pool



USTA's former director of junior tennis for Northern California heads the program at the Sleepy Hollow Swim and Tennis Club. SHSTC Board member Andra Berkman describes him as "an ambassador of the sport of tennis."

would "be of either A.A.U. or Olympic dimensions, thus assuring the membership of ample swimming space and at the same time providing us with the distance necessary for competitive meets."

The initial membership fee was \$240 with space limited to 350 families. Local newspapers reported the attendance of 600, including State Assemblyman Donald Doyle, at the formal groundbreaking July 14, and that Sleepy Hollow volunteers performing electrical and other work significantly reduced costs. By mid-September 1955, "the bulldozing [was] completed, the water line laid" with the pool "well under construction by Padcock Pools."

Sixty Years Later

Andra Berkman, SHSTC Board member and Membership Director, says 2012 revitalization measures will ensure that SHSTC will thrive for another 50 years.

Demolition of the old pool is underway, a roughly \$2 million phase that will culminate in eight lanes and 25 yards of sleek aquatic design on par with the new pool at Wilder. A second pool will enable Lamorinda's littlest ones to have fun honing their own water wings.

"We take our swimming seriously," says fellow Board member Catja McDonald. Head Coach Matt Ehrenberger has been with SHSTC since 1994, and also coaches Orinda Aquatics. The program has thrived

under his leadership, becoming one of the top in the country.

Jim Coyne, SHSTC's Director of Tennis, is also a big draw. The former head of junior tennis for the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Northern California, Coyne ran Claremont Resort programs for 27 years before coming to SHSTC. He has helped little lobbers gain confidence via an innovative "peewee tennis" initiative, and also has many adult pupils who are fans. Berkman calls him an "ambassador of the sport of tennis."

McDonald, an architect herself, is overseeing the SHSTC revitalization by project managers ProPM, architects Mark Cavagnero Associates, and builders Oliver & Company. Tennis courts will be renovated as part of phase two; phase three will upgrade SHSTC buildings. Planners hope to see more recreational activities in phase four – possibly even the addition of horseback riding trails. "We have about 25 acres zoned as R-40 (recreational use) and the remaining acreage is a scenic easement," says McDonald.

A ribbon cutting is expected to be held this spring, along with a membership drive. The club, no longer exclusive to the Sleepy Hollow neighborhood, attracts members from Moraga, Lafayette and Oakland, as well as Orinda. To learn more, visit: www.sleepyhollowlegends.net/.

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Celebration of The Barn's 100th Anniversary

By Sophie Braccini



Former bartenders tell stories of life at the Barn, from left: Dave Fleuti, Scott Carr, John Hoover and Rusty Pauli. Photo Elizabeth Machado

When you talk to Saint Mary's Alumni from the '50s to the '80s, you're sure to hear stories about The Barn. The historical building still located in Moraga was the rustic gathering place when locals wanted to have a good ol' time. In celebration of its 100th anniversary, Moraga resident Bill Durkin has been recording stories from former Barn customers to give to the Moraga Historical Society for keepsake and future reference.

In the interviews, the name Art Fleuti, who was a long-time bartender, is mentioned frequently. He was a nephew of owner Hellen Hetfield who had her private quarters on the second floor of the Barn. "When you turned 21, the tradition was to go to the Barn where Art would sit you down and serve you a double shot of rum," remembers Bill Robert from more than 40 years ago, "then a second, then a third. But not before you turned 21, Art was pretty strict."

It seems that the Barn was a gathering place for the whole community, with picnic tables, a pinball machine and a jukebox. In the 1950s players from the 49er's would come to the Barn and Fleuti had a bus that would go to the game. "The Barn was unique," remembers John Baitx –

who still lives on Baitx Street in Moraga. (Moraga residents will note many streets are named after these folks.) "Firemen hanged out there; the train station was just across the street. The town was all orchards at the time, and us kids hanged out in the creeks and never got in trouble."

Julie Duncan remembered her time in Moraga some 30 years ago. "This was an old fashion meeting place where people met on Friday and Saturday night."

About 130 guests showed up at the Moraga Barn in September for a big celebration including former patrons, interested visitors, and three former bartenders, Dave Fleuti (Art's son), Rusty Pawli and John Hoover. Durkin presented the testimony he had already recorded, and added new ones on the spot.

Today, the Barn is the headquarters of Canyon Construction and has been completely restored, keeping its historic look, but including the most advanced sustainable features. It is still a place for parties, but most of them are held by private groups such as the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association.

If you have story about The Barn you would like to add, contact Bill Durkin at wtdurkin@hotmail.com.

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