

Recalling Past Lamorinda Gun Use

By Cathy Dausman



1973 MHS yearbook

Photo provided

Gun use and control has been a hot topic among many Americans, but it wasn't long ago that there was sanctioned recreational gun use in "semi-rural" Lamorinda, even among adolescents.

The 1973 Miramonte High School yearbook lists a Rifle Club, supervised by Haldor Berg. The 1974 MHS yearbook chronicles the club's expansion to include archery; it listed a Mr. Muller as advisor. The yearbook says the club took field trips to Chabot Rifle Range and to an indoor archery range in San Pablo. Neither club name was mentioned in the 1972 or 1975 yearbooks.

Harold Hallikainen grew up in Orinda but never shot a gun. "My brother Dave did, though. I think his hearing was damaged by it," he said.

Dave Hallikainen hiked and rode motorcycles along the hills around Orinda where he came across cans used for target practice. He said "the

only shooting I did was behind a friend's house on [Orinda's] Van Tassel Lane. They had a rodent problem. After school we would take turns shooting them with a .22 rifle. No one gave us a hard time about it and to the best of my knowledge none of us turned into mass-murderers."

He also remembers Orinda Hardware sold guns. "Looking at them was the fun part of going there," he said. The guns were BB or pellet guns, a store employee recently clarified. The employee, who declined to be named, said the store sells one model with the relatively slow muzzle velocity of 350 feet per second.

"We only sell to those over 18," he emphasized, and each time they make a sale "the parents get a good talking to" about safety.

Hallikainen remembers firearms being present in several of his friends' homes, but said "we never touched them. Kids just knew not to handle

guns unless you were given the okay by an adult." One 1960s exception to that unwritten code happened, he said, when high school students driving around town shot out residential windows. Not surprisingly, alcohol was involved.

"They hit a house down the street from us and a girl's finger was injured from a bullet fragment," Hallikainen said. "Everyone was shocked."

Erik Olafsson, who was raised in Orinda and now lives in Canyon, said his brother owned a pellet gun when they were young, but added, "I was never interested in it, and have never owned a gun and never will."

He would be happy to have European style gun laws in the U.S. "My parents are Icelandic, and guns are banned there," Olafsson said.

"There's not usually a lot of gunfire around Canyon," noted resident Jonathan Goodwin, who said he didn't play with firearms as a child. "This area is so reverberant that people would likely complain about it."

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YouTube Notoriety for Lafayette Man

By Cathy Dausman



Photo Cathy Dausman

Ian Walters of Lafayette holds an English degree from UC Davis, yet he's never read Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables." He hasn't seen the movie, either. Still, he's familiar with the plot, and has a special fondness for Fantine's haunting solo, "I Dreamed a Dream." Walters and his friend Susannah Long often played the song at full volume when closing up the bookstore where they worked. One night after work Walters parodied the song using the voice of Gollum, a Tolkien "Lord of the Rings" character, and sent it to Long on Facebook.

"Gollum is way more sad than Fantine," Walters pronounced, sounding just a tad bit professorial. Long encouraged him to post it on YouTube. Several thousand views later, the bit was noticed by the viral detection website BuzzFeed. As of this writing, the parody had earned more than 1.47 million hits. And that was just the start.

Days later, Walters posted a se-

quel on YouTube, using Smeagol's (Gollum's other name) voice, this time a parody of the Tears for Fears song "Mad World." That earned 1.16 million views.

In March, Walters released a third parody: "Gollum the Relationship Specialist," for which he sang "Now You're Just Somebody that I used to Know." Salt Lake City radio station KSL taped an interview with him in early March, Walters said.

"I always need a creative project," he said. He views his 15 minutes of fame as a platform as much for his talented friends as for himself. Contributors include Greg Weitzman, playing keyboard in the second video, Relationship Specialist artwork (shirt and matching tees) by Thelonious Elliott, and performance by singer/actress Gia Battista and videography by Collin Davey.

Although he has a financial agreement with BuzzFeed to create at least one more parody, Walters is not ready to quit his day job as sixth-grade math and history teacher at Oakland's Head Royce School.

The projects are really fun, Walters said, and they prove he's not taking himself too seriously. And just in case anyone is unfamiliar with his Lord of the Rings references, Walter's advice, in his own voice, is simply, "Go read the book."

You can view Ian Walters channeling Gollum on his YouTube postings: <http://www.dailydot.com/lol/youtube-guide-first-person-mario-freddie-wong/>
<http://www.dailydot.com/lol/youtube-guide-post-traumatic-harlem-shake-disorder/>
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