

Lamorindans Invited to Celebrate Region's Pioneer Heritage

Moraga Adobe progress update slated for Oct. 21

By Laurie Snyder

California history lovers are invited to learn the latest about local efforts to preserve one of the county's oldest buildings while celebrating the area's rich cultural heritage at a special meeting about the Moraga Adobe from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 21.

Sponsored by the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe (FJMA), the reception and information session will be held in the Garden Room of the Orinda Library (26 Orinda Way), and will include refreshments, live music and a presentation by FJMA members about their continuing efforts to raise funds to purchase the Adobe and roughly 2.3 additional acres of surrounding land from J and J Ranch for \$500,000.

The owners of J & J are building a subdivision on the south Orinda hill between Miramonte High and Del Rey Elementary schools where the Adobe is located. The purchase of the additional land by FJMA from J & J will help preserve the panoramic outlook that pioneer settlers had



Then: The Moraga Adobe in 1922.

Photo courtesy of the Historic American Buildings Survey of California.

from the Adobe's front porch over Lamorinda's spectacular surrounding hills and valleys.

FJMA members are hoping to ultimately rehabilitate and furnish the structure in order to reverse the grand dame's vandalism-fueled decline while growing the next generation of humanities scholars and armchair historians. "Our plan

is to operate the Adobe as a history and learning center, highlighting the history of the Adobe and the Joaquin Moraga family, as well as the history of the pre-Gold Rush, land grant era of the Lamorinda region, with access for school groups and the public," said S.B. Master.

Although this special event is



Now: Lamorinda Weekly photographer Ohlen Alexander captured this shot of the Adobe in April 2013. Completed in the 1840s by Joaquin Moraga, grandson of José Joaquin Moraga – the founder of San Francisco's famed Presidio, the adobe was restored in the 1940s by Katharine Brown White Irvine, widow of James Irvine and a member of the James Irvine Foundation's first Board of Directors.

free, attendees are asked to RSVP in advance: events@MoragaAdobe.org. To learn more about the Adobe and FJMA, check out the

Lamorinda Weekly's online archives at www.lamorindaweekly.com, and visit the Friends' website: moragaadobe.org.

'Touch of the Light' Touches Hearts

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

It starts with sounds. Little everyday sounds that one hardly notices, but that carry a lot of meaning to someone who cannot see. To some-

one who is blind. It is quite challenging to create a film that portrays the life of Huang Yu-Siang, a sightless musician, but Taiwanese director

Chang Jung-Chi does it well in "Touch of the Light."

Loosely based on the real life of the blind Taiwanese pianist Huang, who plays himself in the film, "Touch of the Light" is almost as precisely descriptive as a documentary, yet the movie is also a cross portrait between this musical prodigy and Xiao Jie (Sandrine Pinna), the dancer who does not believe in herself. This sensitive film can be raw at times, but underscores the incredible courage of Huang.

The script takes us into the challenges faced by the young man who leaves his rural life to enter a musical college in Taipei. It also touches on the blossoming, yet platonic relationship with life-challenged dancer Jie.

While the interaction with Jie feels fabricated, it does not negatively

impact the beautiful story of the pianist. When we meet Huang for the first time, he has never lived without the help of his family, especially his mother. Chang portrays the reserved, small woman tactfully; the relationship between mother and son, their subtle links, are suggested in very authentic and restful ways.

It is also with a very light touch that the director shows the efforts of the young pianist towards independence and the difficulties represented in simple everyday tasks, such as finding one's class in a world that's made by and for those who can see. But there is no pity for Huang. As he struggles to cross a street, the audience is elated instead by his desire to know what he is capable of doing. "How would I know if I don't try?" he asks.

Even if the story with Jie seems a bit contrived, there are some very beautiful moments, such as the day she teaches him to dance, or when she takes him to the beach and gets him to free up his stride because he is on a limitless space where he can feel the ground with his feet. She describes his world as "a world without light where every step requires great courage."

His great courage inspires her to get out of her mediocre existence and to try to live her dream – a message we all can understand: If he has the courage to do it, why can't we?

"Touch of the Light" will play for one week beginning Oct. 18 at the Orinda Theatre. This is the first U.S. commercial premiere of this Taiwanese film. For more information, visit www.lamorindatheatre.com.

Women's Hall of Fame Needs Nominees

By Sophie Braccini



Nancie Zimmerman is a rookie on the Contra Costa Commission for Women (CCCW), yet she is already taking on responsibilities. The Moraga resident was appointed member-at-large three months ago and this year is co-chairing the Hall of Fame project, a program that acknowledges women who have enhanced life in Contra Costa County through their careers and/or volunteer activities. Along with her co-chair Joan Silva, she is seeking nominations of local women who have made a difference through their efforts towards equity, innovation, service or achievement in commerce or community outreach.

"The commission is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors," says Judy Carney who was appointed to the CCCW by Gayle Uilkema two years ago. Carney has volunteered in Lafayette in many capacities, including serving as president of the Acalanes Union High School District governing board and on the Lafayette Senior Commission; she was Lafayette's 2008 Citizen of the Year. She owns a rehabilitation, occupational and physical therapy center in Lafayette and is particularly interested in women's health care issues. "One of my goals is to raise the awareness among women about resources

available to them," she says, "for example, women veterans often do not recognize themselves as eligible for veterans health services."

Carney, who was elected secretary of the CCCW, works on the e-newsletter that is a great source of information for women. Supporting women is also what motivated Zimmerman to join the commission. "A good friend of mine, Phyllis Gordon, approached me," she remembers. Gordon is also a CCCW member and part of a local women's business-networking group Zimmerman belongs to.

"I am at a time in my life when my children are leaving home," she says. "I gave a lot to my community, but also want to reach beyond Moraga. I have been very impressed by the group of women on

the commission, and I have been very interested in supporting other women for a long time." For example, she gives a percentage of her sales (she makes jewelry and sells it on Etsy) to women's organizations. "The Hall of Fame is an effort to give visibility to the achievements these women are making, providing a model for other young women and the community. The more women participate in all areas of society, the more everybody benefits," she says.

Anybody can nominate someone; it can be a well-known woman, or an unsung hero. There are seven different nomination categories. Each category needs to have at least three nominees. The categories are: Leadership, Creating Community, Working for Jus-

tice, Preserving the Environment, Improving Health Care, Contributing to the Arts, and Innovating in Science/Technology. Nominations will be accepted until Nov. 14. The nomination form is available on the CCCW website at <http://www.womenscommission.com/resources/Hall-of-Fame/HOFlyer-2014.pdf>.

The names of the nominees will be announced in January 2014, and the Hall of Fame Awards Dinner will be March 20, 2014 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Concord.

The Commission still has room for members-at-large. People interested in working on issues affecting women and girls, like equal pay, girl-on-girl violence or bone health, can send an email to womenscommission@gmail.com.

When Your Teen Doesn't Make the Team

By Margie Ryerson

When your child experiences an upsetting event, like not making the cut for a high school sports team, he or she needs your simple compassion and understanding, not preaching, rationalization or a philosophical perspective. Instead of, "We all have disappointments in life," it's better to say something along the lines of, "That's really tough. You've worked so hard and you've got such great skills." And then keep commiserating while expressing interest in hearing all about what happened and how he's feeling.

Of course, being a teen, he may not want to talk about it with you right there and then, but if you let him know you understand what a let-down this is, he may eventually communicate more. If he isn't talking about it with someone – you, another family member or his friends – it is important to continue to show casual, mild concern over time (which may

require you to avoid displaying your real reaction at having to witness your child's distress). It is also important to spend time with him and provide opportunities for him to express his feelings.

One college student, "Leah," told me how her best time in high school was making the varsity girls' tennis team as a freshman. It was highly unusual and prestigious for a freshman to be on varsity. Then, her worst time was not making the cut sophomore year. Suddenly she was separated from the friends she had made on the varsity team and all of their activities. Her self-esteem and confidence plummeted, and she was embarrassed over this self-perceived failure. Leah's parents and coach convinced her to give the junior varsity team a try so she could still play the sport she loved. Her initial feelings of rejection and inadequacy gradually receded as she was elected co-captain of the team and won almost

all of her matches. Leah formed many wonderful friendships that year, and she made the varsity team her junior year. At that point, Leah was so happy on the JV team that it wasn't a simple decision to move up to varsity, although she did.

Some students don't make the freshman team in their sport. Others who have made the team as a freshman aren't able to progress beyond that. Many sports in Lamorinda high schools are so competitive that even accomplished players don't make the cut.

Teens usually feel an intense loss at not being part of the sport they love and have trained for over many years. For many, their sport has become part of their identity – and teen years are very much about forming one's identity. Additionally, they suddenly feel excluded from their group of friends. They are forced to become outsiders who are not invited to participate in team practices and games, bus rides,

and social events where much bonding occurs.

Another loss is the prestige that accompanies being part of a high school team. In many cases, teens' self-esteem is tied into their sport. Some feel that no one will know who they are if they are not on a team. At a time when it is so important to fit in and be part of a group, they are relegated to the sidelines, literally and figuratively.

All in all, it is important for your teen to realize that naturally he will have feelings of loss, rejection, isolation, low self-esteem and self-confidence, and maybe some depression. The antidote is to express these feelings and take positive action of some kind. This is not the time to crawl into an emotional cave and hibernate. The more pro-active he is, the more he will be able to rise to the challenge of a difficult time. For example, volunteering or trying out a new activity or

sport can provide a positive diversion. Of course, as parents, this is what we all hope for our children: that they will learn how to manage inevitable adversity and will build more inner strength as they mature.



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