

Edward 'Slip' Madigan – an innovative figure from Moraga’s football past

By John T. Miller

In his recent book, “The Incredible Slip Madigan,” Oakland writer Dave Newhouse resurrects an almost forgotten figure from Moraga’s past, chronicling the achievements of one of the most innovative football coaches and raconteurs of the game’s early history.

In his 19 years of coaching at Saint Mary’s College from 1921-39, Madigan compiled a record of 117-45-12. More importantly, however, Madigan was primarily responsible for relocating the college from Oakland, where it was known as “The Brickpile,” with a student body of 60 students, to the bucolic fields of Moraga in 1928. His ability to get SMC on the national map helped transform the small time college into a nationally known powerhouse and attracted some of the nation’s top college recruits.

Madigan played for Knute Rockne at Notre Dame and was a teammate of the famous George (“Win one for the Gipper”) Gipp. In the season before Madigan took over at SMC, the team lost to Cal by a score of 127-0. The next year

Madigan’s team lost by only 21-0, shaving 106 points off the deficit. This presaged many years of competitive football against some of the top teams in the country.

Madigan was an innovator, essentially inventing the “chalk talk,” spring ball, and the training table. He was the first coach to travel cross-country by train, playing and defeating national powerhouse Fordham University in their first of many encounters. Later, he was the first to travel to Hawaii – by ship – to play military teams on the island before it was a state. In addition, he was flashy, dressing the team in silk rather than the customary khaki.

Before signing his contract with Saint Mary’s, Madigan astutely stipulated that he would get 10 percent of the gate at the football games. This amounted to far more than his salary, and provided a healthy income for the family – even during the Depression.

In addition to his great success on the gridiron, the indefatigable Madigan also coached basketball, baseball, and – eventually – boxing, while carrying a full-time

teaching load. While he never lived in the Lamorinda area, Newhouse notes that Madigan must have had plenty of sleepovers in Moraga due to his long hours and the difficult ride home to Oakland, since the Caldecott Tunnel hadn’t been built yet.

After he was fired from his coaching job at SMC, Madigan’s joint degree in law and architecture from Notre Dame served him well, as he built a million dollar business building homes in central Contra Costa County.

According to Newhouse, one of the pleasures in writing the book was to discover the many phenomenal athletes of the day. “I had never heard the names of some of these players who were the super stars of their day. They would be truly remarkable in any era.”

Newhouse’s research into the book was aided by access to the family’s exhaustive collection of scrapbooks detailing the team’s records and accomplishments. Slip Madigan’s son, Edward, who lives in the same Oakland house he grew up in, was instrumental in providing the information.

While Madigan’s body is

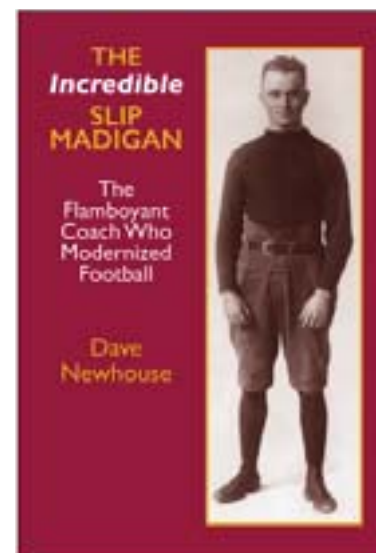
buried at nearby St. Mary’s Cemetery in Oakland, the book provides details that his spirit is still very much felt on campus. One chapter late in the book chronicles many sightings of Madigan’s ghostly presence. Also mentioned is a story of a major remodeling project in the administration offices, where the door to the huge safe had to be removed during construction. When crews returned the following morning, the door was back on and locked, and none of the combinations on record would work until an older Brother suggested they try Madigan’s old combination. It worked.

Newhouse, a retired sports writer who worked primarily for the Oakland Tribune, also spent a couple years at the Contra Costa Times during the Dean Leshner era. He has written about many sports figures from the past.

One of Newhouse’s goals, especially in this one, is to bring back to life great contributors from the past who may be lost to succeeding generations. “While working on this story, hardly anyone I spoke to had any knowledge of Slip Madigan,” he says.

There are plenty of houses that Madigan built in the Central Contra Costa County, but none of them were as enduring or substantial as Saint Mary’s College, which Madigan is credited as helping to create, also architecturally, in Moraga.

Although SMC at times seems to present an identity separated from the town, back in the day when Slip Madigan held sway, the name of Moraga traveled across the country with the fame of the Gaels football team, earning a reputation as fabled as the coach himself.



Glorietta Elementary brings us ‘Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Jr.’



Thursday cast

Submitted by Hillary Weiner

Glorietta Elementary School presents their Spring Musical, “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Jr.” on May 17 and 18. Based on the award-winning Broadway musical and the beloved film, Glorietta’s “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Jr.” will capture hearts in a whole new way, as a fantasti-

cal musical adventure with an out-of-this-world car that flies through the air and sails the sea. The eccentric inventor, Caractacus Potts, sets about restoring an old race car with the help of his children Jeremy and Jemima. They soon discover the car is magic, and can float and take flight. When the evil Baron Bomburst tries to take the magic car for himself,

the family joins forces with Truly Scrumptious and Grandpa Potts to outwit the Baron and Baroness and the villainous Child Catcher. Glorietta’s “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Jr.” is sure to be an amazing stage spectacle filled with unforgettable songs that the audience will find “Truly Scrumptious.”

This production of “Chitty



Music set and tech crew

Photos provided

Chitty Bang Bang, Jr.” is directed by music teacher Ron Pickett, with the assistance of parent producer Susan Jordan. There are two student casts, comprising approximately 80 students, along with 12 students participating in the student tech crew. The production is funded through parent contributions, Glorietta Parents Club and EFO. “Chitty Chitty

Bang Bang, Jr.” takes place at Glorietta Elementary School, 15 Martha Road, on Friday, May 17, at 4 and 7 p.m., and Saturday, May 18, at 3 and 7 p.m. Tickets for the Friday and Saturday performances (all reserved seating) will be available in advance online at www.showtix4u.com. Tickets may also be available at the door prior to the show.

A little bit of the tropics comes to Moraga



Photos Vera Kochan

Valerie Lee Ow with her Bouquets to Art re-creation
By Vera Kochan

The Moraga Garden Club held its annual Spring Luncheon April 18 at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center in Moraga. True to their name, garden club members provided magnificent table centerpieces adhering to this year’s tropical paradise theme entitled “Orchids Away.”

The entire room was bathed with the scent of multi-colored and varying species of orchids. A virtual

vacation for the olfactory glands. Centerpieces involved displays with boats, leis, Hawaiian statuary, bird cages, ornate pottery and even Easter egg ornaments.

The décor did not outshine the club members who came dressed in outfits bearing floral motifs.

As if all of this wasn’t enough to prove what the Moraga Garden Club is all about, the luncheon’s guest speaker sent the day’s theme over the top. Valerie Lee Ow, proprietor of J. Miller Flowers

and Gifts in Oakland, whipped up beautiful flower arrangements with such speed and precision, the crowd was left begging for more.

Ow, a 15-year member of the Lafayette Garden Club, has taken over the 49-year-old helm of her family-owned florist shop. If any proof was needed to confirm her skills as a master florist, Ow’s creations have been featured in the de Young Museum’s prestigious Bouquets to Art exhibit for 20 years.

This year’s museum exhibition marks the 35th anniversary, and according to the DeYoung it’s “one of the Museum’s most popular events.” It’s a “weeklong display of floral designs inspired by the works of art in the de Young’s galleries.”

Explained Ow, “I didn’t initially want to do the Bouquets to Art, because I’d have to drive into San Francisco every day to replenish the flowers.” This year’s displays feature the arrangements of 150 designers.

Ow’s assignment this year is to florally replicate painter Frederic Edwin Church’s masterpiece “Rainy Season in the Tropics.”

“There are no awards or prizes,” Ow said. “It’s the thrill of being part of the event.”

During the luncheon, Ow recreated several of her previous Bouquets to Art entries which her daughter, Jacqueline Ow, compared with copies of the original works of art.

When asked how a florist is chosen as a designer for the special exhibit, Ow informed the awestruck assemblage, “They go through your portfolio and visit your shop to make sure that you are equipped to handle the assignment and that your creations won’t disappoint

the patrons.”

To see Ow’s upcoming creation, visit the Bouquets to Art exhibit at The de Young Museum, June 4-9. Advance tickets are strongly recommended.



One of several centerpieces created by Moraga Garden Club members.