



MORAGA

Town Council: Special meeting Wednesday, Feb. 15, 5:30 p.m.

Regular meeting Wednesday, Feb. 22, 6:30 p.m.

Planning Commission: Tuesday, Feb. 21, 6:30 p.m.

Moraga School District Board Meetings:

Tuesday, March 14, 6 p.m. www.moraga.k12.ca.us.

See public meetings schedule on this page and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us

Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

Do you have a person or couple in mind to be honored as the 2023 Moraga Citizen(s) of the Year?

Selection criteria are as follows:

- Cannot be a current elected member or paid staff of the Town Council, the Town or any other local public agency (e.g., School District or Fire District);
- Must have a Moraga mailing address;
- Nominees should be persons who: (1) have given their time, talent and treasure to help make Moraga a vibrant community, one where people want to live, work and shop; and (2) bring the community together and make us proud to be residents of Moraga.

Please email your nomination to nominations@lamorindaweekly.com or mail it to Moraga Citizen of the Year Nominations, Lamorinda Weekly, 1480 Moraga Road Suite C # 202, Moraga CA 94556. The deadline for receipt of nominations is Thursday, March 9. A celebration dinner will be held on Friday, April 28, in the Holy Trinity Cultural Center in Moraga to honor the winner.



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Former President Gerald R. Ford once taught at SMC's Pre-Flight School during WWII



Commemorative medallion presented to President Gerald R. Ford Photo provided

By Vera Kochan

During World War II, the United States Navy chose Saint Mary's College as one of the government's four Pre-Flight schools that served to train pilots between 1942-1946. In that period, almost the entire campus included thousands of Navy men who were housed in temporary barracks.

Thirty years before becoming the 38th President of the United States, Lieutenant Gerald R. Ford, fresh from a tour on the U.S.S. Monterey in the South Pacific, was reassigned to SMC as an instructor in late 1944. His prior experience at another Navy Pre-Flight School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina involved teaching elementary seamanship, ordinance, gunnery, first aid, and military drills.

Besides serving as a pre-flight instructor, Ford taught cadets in the school's football division where, according to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum, "aggressiveness, coordination, and alertness" would "help these future pilots become

tougher physically than all enemies."

In April 1945, the Navy assigned Ford to Naval Reserve Training Command in Glenview, Ill. While that marked the end of his short career at SMC, the school, as well as the town of Moraga, chose to honor his service here 31 years later, during Ford's visit to the city of Walnut Creek in order to dedicate a replica of the Liberty Bell as a war memorial. The bell is located in present-day Liberty Bell Plaza.

Although Moraga did extend an official invitation to Ford to revisit the town during that May 1976 Contra Costa County trip, his office politely declined due to Ford's busy schedule, suggesting that he might return to California later in the fall.

This did not deter the Moraga Town Council or SMC from presenting a commemorative medallion to Ford during Walnut Creek's celebration. In an unattributed newspaper source, then mayor Merle Gilliland said, "I received a call Friday and was

invited to sit on the platform" with Ford. Other local mayors and county supervisors received such an invitation.

"This commemorative medallion was a gift to President Gerald R. Ford from Councilman Merle D. Gilliland and T. Mel Anderson, President of St. Mary's College of California," states the Ford Museum. "The oval-shaped, bronze disc is adorned with a crest in relief on the front and 'Moraga Family Crest Presented to President Gerald R. Ford May 25, 1976 by Town of Moraga & St. Mary's College, Moraga, California' inscribed on back. It measures 3.5" W x 4.5" L." The medallion was made by SMC's metal arts instructor Victor Ries.

Shortly thereafter, both Gilliland and Anderson received identical letters from Ford stating, "It was a real pleasure to visit California. The Moraga Family Crest presented jointly will serve as a lasting remembrance."

The communication between Ford and SMC did not end there. In 1993, Anderson and then Regent Gerry Fitzpatrick visited Ford at his Rancho Mirage, Calif. home to personally deliver a plaque and confer the title of Honorary Alumnus on the former instructor. According to a 2007 article by John Grennan of SMC's Office of College Communications, Anderson was quoted as saying about the visit, "He remembered living in Orinda and driving over to the campus each morning. He really enjoyed his time here."

Ford later wrote to Anderson, "I have wonderful memories of my limited service at St. Mary's."

Special thanks to Moraga Historical Society President Susan Sperry and Archivist Bonnie Krames.

Parks and Rec's Teddy Bear Tea reaches whole new level of fun



Designers craft their teddy bears' T-shirts

Photo Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

Set under a graceful white tent surrounding the entire patio of the Hacienda de las Flores, the Teddy Bear Tea was a magical event for young children and their families. Not even the on-again-off-again rain could dampen the glow of the beautifully lit surroundings and the delicate sounds of the water fountain that accompanied the background music of Disney jazz tunes on the sound system.

The Feb. 5 party, put on by Moraga's Parks and Recreation Department, cost \$40 per person, and each child was able to take home a sizable teddy bear as a souvenir of the day's theme. Guests were en-

couraged to dress in party attire which added to the festive occasion's ambiance.

The town's Recreation Supervisor Jasmine Bateson, Recreation Coordinator Donald Scully, Part-Time Administrative Assistant Mellissa Church, and members of the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee kept the event running smoothly for the 59 attendees (more than half of which were children) that also included a few dads and brothers.

Round tables were set with springtime-green colored table cloths, silverware, white plates, paper napkins decorated with a teddy bear, and black tea or herbal tea bags tucked into white, crockery-style mugs. Pastel-hued crock-

ery tea pots full of hot water were brought to the table for a parental serve-yourself experience. Apple juice was also served.

The crown jewel of any tea party is always the three-tiered plate stand as center piece, containing delectable finger foods. On the menu were a wide array of tea sandwiches consisting of: cream cheese and cucumber, egg salad with sweet red pepper, ham and cheese, pinwheels containing either turkey, roast beef or ham, and vanilla cream cheese with strawberry jam on sweet potato biscuits. Additional offerings were: miniature Quiche Lorraine or Quiche Florentine, assorted cheeses, fresh strawberries, and grapes.

As if that wasn't enough, a wide assortment of small desserts dazzled the eyes and taste buds of the "pinkies up" crowd: mini-cupcakes, brownies, and shortbread cookies, along with madeleines, miniature blueberry or chocolate chip muffins.

Once guests had their fill, the children scampered off into the Fireside Room in order to decorate a small white T-shirt for either their white or brown stuffed teddy bear to wear. The craft table was loaded with multi-colored felt pens, sticker gems, ribbons and more. Most of the kids wasted no time in naming their new members of the family. Kenna, 5, named her bear Diamond and drew pink hearts onto the shirt with the additional touch of a pink diamond sticker gem (ergo the name). Maria, 5, decorated her bear's shirt with blue marker designs that would put Versace to shame. Her bear, Mia, is now quite the fashion plate.

The Parks and Recreation Department's 2023 Spring Activity Guide is just around the corner. Be sure to check out all of the upcoming new activities along with old favorites.