



Last year's Fourth of July parade in Orinda featured marching bands, horse-drawn wagons, stilt walkers and much more. Photos Sora O'Doherty

Plans in place for another festive Fourth in Lamorinda

By Sora O'Doherty and Vera Kochan

The 36th annual Orinda Fourth of July parade has the theme of Earth Kindness, and the Grand Marshal will be The Friends of the Orinda Nature Area, who recently won the William Penn Mott Jr. environmental award for 2023. The parade is put on every year by the Orinda Association, with the help of the city of Orinda and many, many volunteers. In fact, the OA is still looking for volunteers to help with the parade this year.

The competition to design a T-shirt for the parade was won by Wagner Ranch fifth-grader Aavya Khanna (now a rising sixth-grader.) T-shirts bearing her design can be ordered from the Orinda Association. The design in red, white

and blue, depicts Theatre Square and elements of Independence Day and is printed on light blue fabric. Following the pattern of previous years, the event will begin with a pancake breakfast on the Library Plaza at 7:30 a.m. At 7:55 a.m. there will be a flag raising, followed at 8 a.m. by a fun run to raise funds for and awareness of the Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood Foundation. At 9 a.m. there will be an Orinda library book sale, and the parade itself will start at 10 a.m. on the Theatre District side of town. The parade route will lead through the Theatre District and wend its way to Orinda Village. Parade participants will stop and perform musical numbers and provide other entertainment. ... continued on Page A8

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Varellas one of two from Lamorinda inducted into USA Water Polo Hall of Fame

By Jon Kingdon

Like so many who grew up in Lamorinda, Peter Varellas – who was inducted into the USA Water Polo Hall of Fame on June 9 along with Swimming and Water Polo Coach Ron Richison – began swimming at a young age. “I started at the age of three at Moraga Tennis and Swim Club and that was my summer programming for the next 10-12 years,” Varellas said. “My dad (Larry) had been a swimmer at Cal-Berkeley, and they wanted me and my sister to get in the water early.”

Water polo was not something that was readily available as it is today. “I did not start playing until high school at Campolindo,” Varellas said. “There were not a lot of clubs for kid’s pre-high school age, and I did not know much about it. When I

was starting high school, I had no plans to play any sport in the fall and anticipated playing basketball and baseball.”

Once again, it was at his father’s suggestion that he give water polo a try. “I resisted it initially, but he said I should try it for a week and if I don’t like it, I could quit,” Varellas said. “Even though the first week of water polo was pretty hellish, I didn’t quit. It was when I was a sophomore when I really started loving it. I was very fortunate to have two very good coaches – Boyd LeChance and James Lathrop – both of whom were super influential for me in teaching me the sport and allowing me to see where it could take me.”

It also helped that Varellas had a natural affinity for the pool. “It was the combination of the water, and

the strategic portion and team feel of a ball sport. I love swimming but you just don’t get that in swimming, and it put all the pieces together and it just clicked for me.”

From Campolindo it was on to Stanford where he earned both athletic and academic accolades. Varellas competed in four NCAA championships, winning his freshman year, was a two-time all-American, was named the PAC 10 male athlete of the year and earned an NCAA post-graduate scholarship.

Then it was off to Italy where Varellas played for Rari Nantes in a little town called Saona, in the northwestern part of Italy on the beach. “It was so amazing,” Varellas said. “I went there right after I graduated from Stanford. I didn’t know anyone there and I didn’t speak the language. ... continued on Page A10



Peter Varellas Photo provided

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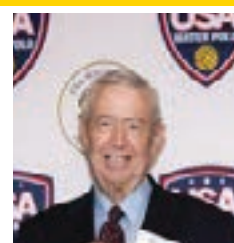
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