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## Letters to the editor

A dissenting view on Lafayette's hillside 'memorial'

I first saw the hillside crosses opposite the Lafayette BART station in February 2005, immediately after returning from a yearlong tour of duty in Baghdad as a Medical Service Corps officer in the US Army. When I saw them, I became angry as it seemed to me that the sacrifices of my fellow servicemembers, Coalition forces and countless Iraqis were being exploited for a cheap political end. The intervening 20 years have not changed my opinion, that it serves no useful purpose and should be removed. Real people with real families lost their lives in Iraq, and in Afghanistan, and in countless other places. The impersonal and anonymous nature of the Lafayette crosses underscores that the people who erected them did not know or care about the victims or the parents, siblings and children who suffered, as individuals. The crosses provide no comfort to the families of the fallen and are not meant to.

Ask any soldier, if you should be fortunate enough to meet one, and they will tell you that wars are bad, especially for the people in them. But they will also tell you that their comrades who gave their lives, and their families, deserve personal recognition for their sacrifices as people, and not as faceless unknowns. There are better examples of war memorials, the Vietnam War Memorial for one, and even Lafayette's own Veterans Memorial Building, where the builders took the trouble to find out who they were memorializing, and why.

John Donnelly

Moraga

Crosses: Overrated impact, dilapidated, kinda creepy. Not Iconic anymore

I've been meaning to write regarding the crosses for several months. Now is the time.

First, I live two blocks away, and have passed by the hillside thousands of times in my residency, maybe tens of thousands of times. I recently brought the young one there, under two years old, on a walk. We hovered near the center of the exhibit, but our stroll there was short lived as up close, the hillside reveals the crosses are dilapidated, lacking paint, often falling apart, and in general kind of a beside the point exhibit. Certainly nothing profound is felt upon seeing them. I remember the names on some religious memorials but the mass above these names added nothing.

The weathered notion of a non-cemetery hill of crosses is off putting, up close, in their current state. The region has moved on. A small group of Mt. Diablo club members may show up for events, with a camera-seeking politician ready to microphone (verb) on the big days, but I would wager the crosses are a puzzlement to passersby. ?It is not an interesting place. ?The call of the 2000s is long past, regarding such a visual. I appreciate Karen MacMichael doing a world peace sermon, but many residents may have a military connection, even if a generation removed, so it is sometimes already on the radar. We do have a Purple Heart winning Iraq War veteran housed near the corners of Monroe and Moraga Blvds. He, like the current owner of the hillside, shall remain anonymous. I tend to think one of these nameless folk would be more publicly embraced than the other. The grateful city that we are, ?I assume many of the Acalanes graduating classes near 2001 knows this veteran's travails and triumphs.

Time moves on. The crosses have had their day. Maybe in the case of the hillside, I would favor 400 units of low-income housing, yes, in my backyard. Let's do it! As long as the overseeing housing authority is not derelict and does not misdirect its funding, the wood of these 400 will not chip and crack, nor split and fray, as has the currently embedded material.

Dad did a tour or two, or was it three. Yes, his aunt, and parents, and wife, and children, know the costs. I heard it said recently, no need to be sanctimonious or preachy. Often a picture is worth a thousand words.

Jim Rule

Lafayette

Regarding East Bay Sea Serpents story

I was delighted to read Asha Spitzer's piece on the East Bay Sea Serpents' participation in this summer's Orinda Moraga Pool Association swim meet. ? It is rare to find a news story with such in-depth coverage of a Special Olympics event, complete with athlete comments. ? Spitzer does an exemplary job of treating the athletes as athletes and bringing the event to life.

Anyone interested in swimming or volunteering with the East Bay Sea Serpents can visit the team's site at? <http://www.ebss.team/>.

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Jennifer Reid

Lafayette

50th Anniversary of Orindawoods

Orindawoods is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Thanks to our Firewise volunteers, Orindawoods is a Firewise USA community. We spend hundreds of thousands of dollars maintaining our 187 acres (about 4% of Orinda!) and complying with MOFD regulations. Last year, we removed 40 dead and dying large trees. We clear our large open spaces every spring to minimize fuel for a fire. Orindawoods Drive is a major

evacuation route in case of a natural disaster. Orindawoods also clears the route for our first responders and neighbors.

We have no gates or barriers. Lamorinda residents can jog or stroll along on our sidewalks and enjoy our lovely gardens and parks. We do ask dogwalkers to please clean up after your dog and remove all waste. Please don't leave a bag of dog waste on our sidewalks! We love the steady procession of dogwalkers and pets, but note we don't have anyone to clean up after your pet!

Our lovely pond is home to waterfowl and fish. We welcome visitors to enjoy the pastoral scene, but we cannot permit fishing due to insurance restrictions. Please pass the word, as some anglers apparently can't read the "No Fishing" signs!

Orindawoods takes seriously its charge as the steward of this beautiful community. We extend a warm welcome to our fellow Lamorindans to enjoy a lovely walk through Orindawoods in its golden anniversary year.

Dick Rogan,  
President, Orindawoods Association

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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