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Local author publishes emotional memoir of life with celebrity parents

By Sora O'Doherty



Author Christine Scherick O'Brien
Photo Sora O'Doherty

In "Crave: A Memoir of Food and Longing," author Christine Scherick O'Brien writes of her life growing up with her famous movie and television producer father, Edgar Sherick, and her mother, a former Miss Missouri and talented musician who was afflicted with health problems. Her mother's search for health through nutrition affected the lives of her four children, O'Brien and her three brothers, as they were growing up. O'Brien appeared at an Orinda Books luncheon Nov. 14 to speak about her life and her book. Her book was published on Nov. 13 by St. Martin's Press.

Born on the East Coast, O'Brien came to California as a teenager, moving with her father's career from New York City to Hollywood. Eventually she wound up in the Bay Area. Having lived for six years in Lafayette, O'Brien and her husband Tim now live in Walnut Creek. She teaches at Saint Mary's College in Moraga and he coaches rugby there. She met her husband when she was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley. Having grown up with three brothers, O'Brien was tough and physical, so when she was invited to start a women's rugby team at Cal, she accepted the challenge. Having completed her senior year at Beverly Hills High School, where O'Brien didn't feel that she fit in with the surfers and jocks, playing rugby at Berkeley made her feel "seen again."

When she graduated from Cal, she went on to earn a master's degree at Saint Mary's. She is proud of her writing in "Crave." My language, she says, has been called "so evocative, so unusual." O'Brien believes that each writer's language is unique, "like your fingerprints."

In "Crave," O'Brien writes about how both of her parents

affected her. Her father was, she says, "a rage-aholic: he was addicted to yelling." But he was also creative and powerful. When O'Brien was with her father on the sets of some of his productions, she was deep within the magical world of filmmaking, where the actors were treated like royalty, and she was too. This led her to feel that celebrity was very important, and for a time skewed her approach to relationships.

When O'Brien was 10 years old, her mother collapsed for the first time. They were living in New York City at that time, in the historic Dakota apartment building, where O'Brien once went trick-or-treating to the door of Lauren Bacall. O'Brien's mother tried various doctors, but they failed to make her feel better, so she took matters into her own hands, turning to practitioners of healing through diet. She followed several diets that seemed extremely radical at the time, although perhaps less so now. After starting on blended drinks containing fresh yeast and raw liver, she moved on to a regimen that focused on blended salads and vegetable juices, with small amounts of daily protein.

O'Brien mentions in "Crave" that in her father's film, "Rosemary's Baby," which was filmed at the Dakota, Mia Farrow is "forced to ingest blended green drinks with strange ingredients to prepare her to spawn an unhuman child."

"I feel some relief," she noted, "that someone is recognizing the very thing I have myself felt, that this is a scary place to live."

O'Brien and her brothers followed the diet as their mother directed, because, O'Brien says, "we felt we were keeping her alive." But they were always hungry, if they were not in fact malnourished. O'Brien writes about how she was "deliriously eager" for smoked salmon, and savored the experience of eating lobsters. At summer camp she dreamed of steak and reviled the white diet of carbohydrates. "It doesn't matter how much I eat," she says, "I am never full."

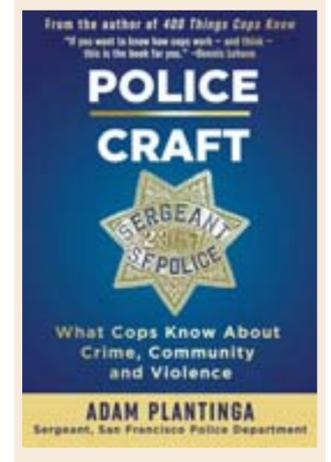
O'Brien details how she admired both of her parents, but worried about her mother's health and her father's rage. She ricochets from the relative deprivation of her mother's strict diet to the luxurious trappings of stardom, as she gets to hang out on her father's movie sets or accompany him on the red carpet at the

Golden Globes.

Always a writer, O'Brien kept diaries as a child, and her memoir stretches from those early days in Manhattan to her present live in the Bay Area. "Crave" is her first book.

Book Signing for another local author Dec. 1

Moraga resident, author and San Francisco Police Sgt. Adam Plantinga will be talking about and signing his second non-fiction book about law enforcement, "Police Craft," from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Dec. 1 at Orinda Books.



Looking Good in Lamorinda

Fashionable holidays

By Moya Stone



Marcia Brunning knits up samples for her shop Busy Stix.

Photo Moya Stone

As a knitter I'm always looking for quality yarn and in Lamorinda we have Busy Stix, which is located in downtown Lafayette. The spacious shop offers an array of yarns in wool, cotton, silk, and blends in bright and subdued colors by top-quality brands like Shiburi.

Owner Marcia Brunning was taught how to knit by her mother and she has been working in some capacity of the yarn business for more than 20 years. With her shop, Brunning has created a welcoming environment for experienced and novice knitters alike, who stop by with needles in hand, sit around the shop's large dining table and stitch away. "We encourage peo-

ple to come in, knit and relax," says Brunning. Some arrive with questions, some are looking for new projects, others just want company while they make progress on sweaters, socks, or the latest hot item – shawls.

Brunning says that knitters have taken to the shawl and sport it in fashion-forward ways, like the back in the front. Other fashionable choices are knit hats, chunky sweaters, and tunics that layer well with designer clothing brands such as Eileen Fisher. For inspiration, Busy Stix stocks magazines and books. Also available are knitting kits by local business Bella Yarn, knitting needles, crochet hooks – anything a stitcher might need. Plus there's no shortage of gift items. Felt bags, soaps and lotions, shawl pins, and charming holiday ornaments. Think gifts for your favorite knitter or how about encouraging someone to get started? Brunning offers classes and often works with Lafayette children's bookstore, Bel & Bunna's, teaching both young boys and girls to knit. Busy Stix is located at 3409-D Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette.

Lafayette hat designer Chris Del Monica will be showing her festive wares at the Hacienda Holiday Faire (2100 Donald Dr.) in Moraga Nov. 30 to Dec. 2. Hats are really in style," says Del Monica, who has been selling out of her fascinators at recent shows thanks to the influence of this year's Royal Weddings. For in-

formation, visit haciendafoundation.org/hacienda-holiday-faire.

The Center for Community Arts Handcrafted Holiday Sale is happening Nov. 30 to Dec. 2 in Walnut Creek. Center for Community Arts offers classes throughout the year and hosts this annual show featuring the works of more than 70 students and instructors, many of whom are from Lamorinda. Program Manager Maile Ogasawara says there will be jewelry, ceramics,



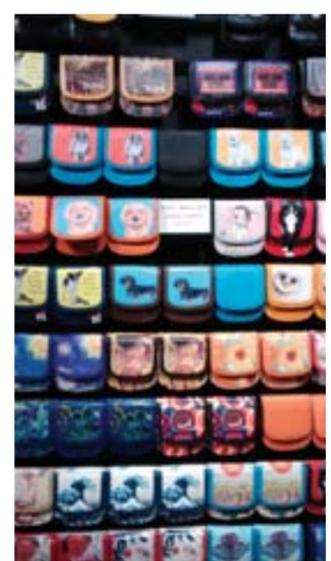
How about putting this on your holiday wish list? "East Meets West" jewelry exhibit at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco.

Photo courtesy Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

glass art, mosaics, photos, and much more. "We support local artists and community members," says Ogasawara, "giving access and opportunity to curated shows." The opening reception, with music, food, and a crafts table where shoppers can explore their own creativity, will be held at 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 30. The first 50 attendees each day will receive a free tote bag. Center for Community Arts is located at 111 N. Wiget Lane in Walnut Creek: www.communityarts.org/handcrafted.

Tucked away near FedEx behind La Fiesta Square in Lafayette is Alicia Klein Showroom, which offers for sale handbags, briefcases, and small gift items such as key chains, card cases, luggage tags – just right for stocking stuffers, Hanukkah, teachers gifts, babysitters, or Secret Santa. Stop by through Dec. 23 for holiday shopping and some Moraga-made chocolates. Hofssi Chocolates will be passing out samples and selling their popular sweets. Alicia Klein Showroom is at 3541 Wilkinson Lane in Lafayette: www.AliciaKlein.com.

For a festive treat with plenty of sparkle, I recommend the current exhibition at the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco, "East Meets West: Jewels of the Maharajas" from the Al Thani Collection. On now through Feb. 24, this exhibit includes 150 items of stunning jewelry and other accessories from 17th century India to modern inter-



Alicia Klein is a co-designer of the Taxi Wallet, available at Alicia Klein Showroom in Lafayette.

Photo Moya Stone

pretations by western designers: legionofhonor.famsf.org.

Speaking of bling, local jewelry designer Natasha Grasso is closing her Moraga shop in the Rheem Shopping Center. Everything in the store is 20 percent off through the middle of December. The bricks and mortar may be going away but Grasso is still designing and selling her popular jewelry online at www.natasha-grasso.com.

Enjoy a safe and happy holiday season and remember to go forth in style!

Moya Stone is a freelance writer and fashion blogger at www.overdressdeforlife.com.