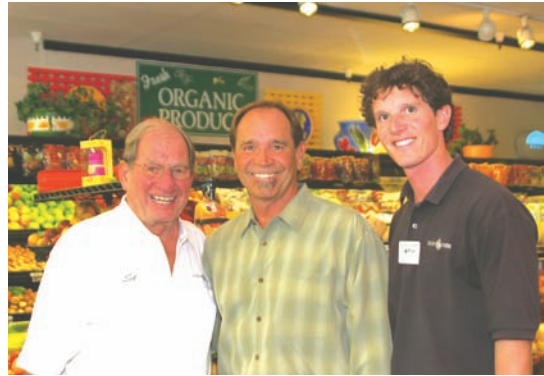


# Life in LAMORINDA

## The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from the Tree in Lamorinda's Intergenerational Family Businesses

By Virginia Fox

*Customers and clients referring their children and grandkids in a stream of loyal patronage --Siblings, grandkids and parents working together -- Work ethics and customer service passed down through the generations.*



The Strokes Family, Diablo Foods



The Kosich and Callahan Family, Kosich and Callahan Insurance services

Looking behind the scenes at three of Lamorinda's intergenerational family businesses, Diablo Foods and Kosich and Callahan Insurance services in Lafayette, and McDonnell's Nursery in Orinda, we see how three businesses are beating the odds for decades of success and family harmony.

The engaging photo of five year old Charlie Stokes on the office shelf of Diablo Foods founder Ed Stokes suggests she'll have many opportunities to be what she wants when she grows up. But if she follows the footsteps of her Grandfather and Grandmother, Mother and Father, Aunt and Uncle and Cousins, Charlie will one day find her place working in Diablo Foods, Lafayette's premium independent fine foods market. And she'll start working behind the scenes as soon as she is old enough to help.

Growing up in the business gives everyone a chance to see if they think they want to make it a lifelong job and in many cases it's a natural fit from those early years.

"We're all ridiculously close," laughs Stokes daughter, Connie Collier, who joined the staff ten years ago and is a partner with her brother, Dan, who is VP and General Manager and in line to replace his Dad if he ever steps down. Fondly recalling the years of working behind the scenes in many positions, Collier's family now dubs her the "Buyer of Foo Foo La La," responsible for housewares, health and beauty items and local specialty products

you can't get anywhere else along with hundreds of donations in response to community requests.

### When the Kids Join in the Fun

With the picture of his Dad, Walter, looking down in the conference room at Kosich and Callahan Insurance Services in Lafayette, there's no doubt who was Ken's mentor. Growing up with both parents in the insurance business since 1946, Ken Kosich thought of being a lawyer but changed his mind when he realized the required number of years in school. He joined the firm after graduating from Chico and has been running the office since 1986.

Ken always thought his son, Greg, would join the firm. "He'd heard a lot about the business at the kitchen table growing up," Ken says. When Greg came to him after graduating from the University of Santa Clara and asked to join the firm, Ken wasn't surprised.

Greg says having a good relationship with his Dad helps in and out of the office. Greg enjoys being able to ask his Dad how to handle situations and knows he'll get an honest answer. "I'm trying to pass along what I've learned from my own Dad now," says Ken, "to have an open mind, try out new ideas, and encourage Greg to express his opinions."

Following in the footsteps of his Dad, Dick Callahan joined Metropolitan Life Insurance as an agent and in 1999 met Ken Kosich. A handshake agreement formed Kosich and Callahan, two companies under one umbrella offering a

broad range of insurance services.

Familiar to many as the stadium voice of the Warriors and St. Mary's basketball, Callahan says "When I met Ken I knew I'd scored a home run."

Not everyone jumps into the family business without thinking about other options and in some cases, getting work experience first in other places.

Callahan's daughter, Colleen, worked as a teacher for five years before deciding to join her Dad. Her decision came as a total surprise to her family. "If I'd accepted all the bets from people who said it wouldn't work I'd be very rich by now," she says. Seventeen years later, Colleen has earned her own reputation as a seasoned professional designing employee benefit packages, long term health care, and in her spare time producing and hosting a TV show that showcases local non-profit agencies.

Connie Collier says she'll never forget when her son, Daniel, surprised her on his return from living abroad to announce he wanted to join Diablo Foods. "He had a great offer from a San Francisco financial firm which we thought he'd pursue on his return," she says. For Daniel, the decision was the best he ever made. "I realized when I was away how much Diablo Foods was a part of my life," he says. "I love the pace and the variety of things to do. It's a decision I've never regretted."

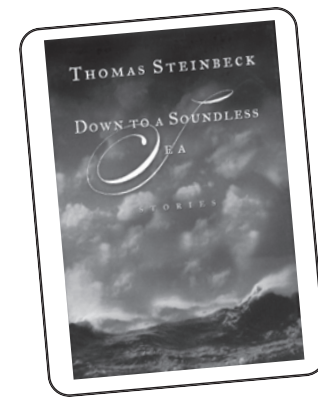
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## What if Everybody in Lamorinda Read the Same Book?

By Sophie Braccini

Susan Weaver, Linda Waldroup and Caroline Gick, Lamorinda's brilliant trio of librarians, are preparing to have our communities join Salt Lake City, Seattle, Buffalo, Anchorage, Omaha, Indianapolis, Arlington, Albuquerque, Redwood City, Brentwood, Danville, Alamo, Los Angeles and hundreds of other cities that are engaged in very successful city-reads programs. All over the United State, programs in which large numbers of people read the same book and share with their friends and neighbors have proven to be an effective way to bring people together and attract to literature those who do not usually go to the library.

The trio's first task was to pick a book. It had to be gender neutral; they wanted it related to California history, not too long and be moderately priced. "And we had to pick something that not everybody had read yet," commented the librarians. They chose Down to a Soundless Sea, by Thomas Steinbeck (son of John Steinbeck). The book is a collection of stories, though it is more accurately depicted as a collection of seven tales, that take place mostly in the Monterey County at the turn of the century through the 1930s. The tales are born of lore and legends that Steinbeck heard while growing up in a family circle of raconteurs. Rich in imagery and uncommon characters, the tales are memorable stories written in a forceful voice that Thomas Steinbeck can call his



own. The librarians loved the book and think it will be very well received by adults of all ages and high school students as well.

Then they tackled the funding challenge. Success for such an operation depends on how available the book is to the entire community. Books are available for borrowing at the library, but what makes this program unique is that books will be made available in public places so people can just pick one up, read it and then return it so that a friend or neighbour can read it next. The three librarians decided to buy 600 books, 200 per city. As usual, our community organizations rose to the occasion and the budget of \$30,000 has been secured. The contributing organizations are: the Friends of the three libraries (Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda), the Lafayette Bookstore and the Orinda Bookstore, the Moraga Women's Society, the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation, Moraga Kiwanis, the Lafayette Community Foundation, the Association of American University Women

and Minuteman Press.

The Lamorinda Reads kick-off is set for September 4th. Events are scheduled throughout the month of October. The discussions held at the 3 libraries will include a children's event: "Otterly Awesome Creatures of Monterey Bay," by Gael Gallagher at the Moraga library on October 20th at 3:00 PM. The Grand Finale will be a reception/author program on October 25th at 7:30 PM in the Orinda Auditorium with author Thomas Steinbeck himself. Books that are returned will be given to local high schools.

### Calendar of events:

- September 4<sup>th</sup>**  
Kick-off, books available in libraries and point of distribution
- September 9<sup>th</sup>**  
Whale Bus in Lafayette and Orinda
- October 11<sup>th</sup>**  
Susan Shillinglaw 7:00 PM Moraga library
- October 13<sup>th</sup>**  
Ruth Halpern 7:00 PM Lafayette library
- October 20<sup>th</sup>**  
Gael Gallagher 3:00 PM Moraga library
- October 25<sup>th</sup>**  
Thomas Steinbeck  
7:30 PM Orinda Auditorium

### Places to pick-up the books:

- Lafayette:**  
Starbucks and Peet's Coffee & Tea
- Orinda:**  
Starbucks, Caffe Teatro, Royal Ground Coffee and Peet's Coffee & Tea
- Moraga:**  
Sisi Café, Starbucks, Curves for Women and Moraga Hardware & Lumber




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