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Public Forum



Rick Konlon, Owner / Photographer LightPath Photography

A sense of community was palpable on the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 20, in the Europa Hofbraeu restaurant on Moraga Way, Orinda.

Europa opened its doors to an early morning crowd, departed from tradition and served up breakfast beginning at 7:30 AM and turned on its three big screen TVs - loud - to permit a rapt audience to witness, together, the Presidential Inauguration, taking place all the way across our great country in Washington, D. C.

The crowd was one to be found only in America: Nabil and Maram, born in East Jerusalem; George, born in Jerusalem, many years in Goeteborg; Amer, born in Amman; Esther, born in El Salvador, Steve, in Canada, Carl, in Honduras, Luisa, in San Sebastian, the Basque part of Spain; Richard, born in Braintree; Sandy, born in Tulsa; Vergie, born in Los Angeles, Carla, in Rochester, Sue, in Berkeley; Peter, in East Lansing, Mike, in Las Vegas, Bob, west of Spokane, at a little stop along the Great Northern tracks, Joe, in San Francisco; Maggie, in Fayetteville. Many others. Americans all.

A week earlier, Dave, Jim, Carl and George, sitting around in a local coffee shop, thought it would be great addition to our "inaugural experience" if we could witness it together, not sitting in front of our own TV's, in our respective living rooms. So, we approached Europa Hofbraeu and proprietors Maria, George, Harry and Lori Boukis (Maria, born in Greece, operating a restaurant in America with a German flavor.) They said, "Yes." And, "We'll turn up those TV's and we'll serve breakfast, too!

So, phone calls were made; signs were put up; e-mails ricocheted around LaMorinda. On Inauguration Day, Europa - certainly the restaurant, maybe the continent, too -- was rockin'. Seventy good folks appeared - from Orinda (some who have been residents here for over 50 years)...Lafayette...Moraga...Martinez... Marin County...San Mateo County...Berkeley. The packed room reverberated with good vibes, good food and good coffee. The audience cheered -- cheered at a bunch of television sets! - at all the right moments. Acclaim greeted the dignitaries on the screen: Past Presidents and spouses: Carter, Bush, Clinton, and - now,

soon-to-be former President George W. Bush. No matter what our diverse political views might have been, no boos. Then, the Supreme Court Justices, the Vice-President and President-Elect. At the end of the oath of office - an oath affirmed by a man who affirms our national diversity -- Barack Hussein Obama - the Europa erupted in applause.

The opening prayer, the oath, the speech, the poem, the music, the benediction, the Star Spangled Banner... over... all too quickly. Power was transferred peacefully -- our nation transformed.

We filed out of the restaurant. We gave our good wishes to Europa Hofbrau, to each other, to our country - and to ourselves.

A new day in our country. In Orinda, this new day -- community at its best.

By Dave Anderson

Dave Anderson is an attorney and Orinda resident. On Election Day, Nov 4, 2008, he worked as a volunteer in a precinct in Dayton, Ohio as part of the Voter Protection Program sponsored by the Obama campaign.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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