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LAMORINDA Community

Famous Author Enchants Sweet Thursdays Crowd

By Cathy Tyson



From left Maria Hjelm, Friends of Lafayette Library Board Member and Chief Producer, Sweet Thursday event series, Dave Simpson, Proprietor, Lafayette Book Store and co-sponsor with Friends of Lafayette Library of Sweet Thursdays, Lisa See and Casey Sasner, Friends of Lafayette Library Board Member and Deputy Producer Photo Cathy Tyson

“Hello literary lovers of Lafayette” said Past President and Board Member of Friends of the Lafayette Library, Linda Peterson, welcoming a roomful of fans to a rare Friday appearance of “literary rock star” Lisa See, author of the new book *Shanghai Girls*.

Like all Sweet Thursdays events, Friends of the Lafayette Library and the Lafayette Book Store co-sponsored the production. For an astounding seventy years the “Friends” have been supporting the library; this was no exception, 20% of books sale proceeds go to the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Lafayette Book Store is proud of its many community partnerships and was twice voted the East Bay’s best indie bookstore. At Sweet Thursdays events, book lovers can get the story behind the story from a famous author, snag an autographed copy and donate to the library, not a bad deal.

“Sweet Thursdays attendees have a great eye and ear for talent. When we had Lisa See after the publication of *Snowflower and the Secret Fan*, our audience members enjoyed her perceptive observations

about friendships between women and what one culture and era can learn from another. She’s continued to grow and blossom as a writer, and we were so grateful to have a coveted spot on her *Shanghai Girls* book tour. She’s a gifted storyteller and someone who’s willing to share the backstory of whatever she’s writing,” said Peterson.

With three novels, one book of non-fiction, three mysteries and numerous articles under her tiny belt, Ms. See has spent her career writing about relationships. It was apparent that many audience members were familiar with recent best sellers *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* and *Peony in Love*, both are book club favorites. “I know a lot about love and hate, husbands and wives...because I’ve experienced them myself,” said See about the old saw, write about what you know.

“This book is the closest to my heart,” said See. “Feeling a loss of the people and places we lose from our lives is at the heart of *Shanghai Girls*.” Sisters Pearl and May are the fictional main characters who leave Shanghai in 1937 for

arranged marriages in Los Angeles.

“The sibling relationship is the longest we will have in our lifetimes. A sister is the person who should stand by you, support you, and love you no matter what. And yet your sister also knows exactly where to drive the knife to hurt you the most.” See had the audience in stitches with many of her observations, for example, “Sisters are for life – I don’t know if that’s a good thing or a life sentence.”

Using colorful anecdotes to review the plot, history, and amazing amount of research behind her latest book, this once self-described “pathetically shy” young woman proceeded to charm the predominantly female audience gathered in the Stanley school gymnasium.

Sweet Thursday events will continue throughout the summer. On June 18 at 7:30 p.m. in the Lafayette Library Sophia Raday will discuss her book, *Love in Condition Yellow: A Memoir of an Unlikely Marriage*. On July 2, also at 7:30 p.m. at the Lafayette Library first time novelist Tanya Egan Gibson will discuss *How to Buy a Love for Reading*.

Moraga Native, MOFD Firefighter Receives Award for Saving Family

By Lucy Amaral



Chris Davies at Station 41

Photo Andy Schreck

Chris Davies, a Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) firefighter didn’t plan on being a hero. He just wanted to make it to the CPR class he was scheduled to teach. The fates, however, had a different idea on the morning of April 4.

Walking out of his house in Concord a little after 6 a.m., Davies heard a distinctive crackling noise, searched out the sound and saw that his neighbor’s home was on fire. “I ran down to the end of the drive and expected to see the family standing outside but nobody was there. I saw the cars in driveway and, on a Saturday morning, I knew they were home,” said Davies.

Davies said his training automatically kicked in and made a quick evaluation of the situation.

After calling the local fire department to give them a ‘report on conditions,’ Davis knocked on the door, trying to alert the residents. With no response and determining that there was no immediate threat of the building collapsing, Davies pushed open the door and began yelling. “The house was full of smoke and the fire was coming in through the walls,” said Davies. “I saw the husband coming down the hall, and at that point he knew the house was on fire.”

Davies carried the family’s young son out of the burning house while the husband made sure his wife got out. Davies then reentered the house and got the family’s two dogs out of the building. Once the family was safely outside and the

fire department was on scene, Davies left to make it to his scheduled CPR training class. “I had some smoke inhalation, but other than that I’m fine,” Davies said.

Davies, 25, has been with the MOFD for six years and according to his mother, Joan, this Moraga native always wanted to be a firefighter. “We have friends and family that were firefighters and that’s all Chris wanted to be,” she said. “Chris was determined. He persevered and worked hard to become one.”

The Fire District found out about the rescue in a roundabout way. A brief mention of the event by Davies to a coworker at a barbecue worked its way up the chain of command, finally reaching his Battalion Chief, Stephen Healy. “I found out from another Battalion Chief, who was quick to point out that Chris left once he rescued those people because he didn’t want the attention,” Healy said.

A bit of attention came his way, anyway. At an award ceremony held on June 17, Davies was presented with a resolution recognizing his heroism as well as a plaque honoring his work. “Chris is a great example of what firefighters are like,” said Healy. “He did what any firefighter would do - helped someone in need, regardless of the risk.”

MOFD Fire Chief Pete Nowicki echoed Healy’s sentiments. “We are extremely proud of Chris,” he said. “His immediate and bold actions exemplify what we have come to expect from all of our firefighters.”

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Moraga’s Housing Element

... continued from page 3

Planning Commission raises important questions for future development in Moraga

“Some of the Town’s zoning and other planning requirements may reduce the feasibility of affordable multifamily housing development,” wrote the consultants in their report. Some of the specifics are that the zoning regulations that allow multifamily housing need the approval of a conditional use permit, and that the design review process may delay and/or result in expensive modifications to housing projects. Most of the Planning Commissioners agreed that streamlining the planning process should be studied.

The rules that govern the approval of secondary units in Moraga were criticized as well. This type of unit could be considered moderate or even low income housing, and it could help the town meet its obligations if more were built.

Former Planning Commissioner Alan Sayles took the stand as part of the public comment process, “This ordinance (regulating the building of secondary units) is a complete failure,” said Sayles, it could be fixed, just make it a design review requirement.”

Sayles added that there are probably secondary units built before the incorporation of the town and an opportunity should be given to legalize their construction. Planning Chair Margaret Goglia proposed an amnesty for those units, a period of time during which people who may have constructed such units without approval could get them registered. The Commission unanimously agreed that changing the rules for secondary units was a necessity.

In its desire to see things ma-

terialize in town, the Planning Commission also said that if “green standards” were recommended for construction, the plan should only advocate affordable options. In an additional effort to refrain from imposing too many constraints on developers, the Commission also suggested that senior housing include only the minimum require-

ments for Universal design (a standard that strives to create housing environments that are usable and effective for everyone, including the elderly and people with disabilities).

Once the Town Council approves the draft, it will be sent to the State for review before coming back to the town for final consideration.

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I knew it was too good to be true

Ask Jeff



Jeff Joyce

Well it looks like summer is finally here and the travel season is in full bloom. As gas prices are slowly inching their way up again, it’s time to consider all those elements that can affect fuel economy besides using a bit less throttle. Tire pressures, wheel alignments, routine maintenance inspections and being sure to keep up with the manufacturer’s service recommendations are just a sample of easy measures to follow.

Dear Jeff:
We’re about to take a trip to the Grand Canyon and I’m sure it’s going to be hot. What can I do to help prevent an overheating problem?
Signed, Hot under the collar in Hercules

Dear Hot:
Never neglect cooling system service. Most manufactures schedule a system coolant exchange every 2 years or every 30,000 miles. Always remember to replace your thermostat when performing cooling system services. Unfortunately there is no factory recommendations for thermostats, but It’s better to be safe than sorry.

Dear Jeff:
During warm weather on the freeway, my car seems to use more gas when I leave my air conditioner off and drive with

my windows down. I thought running my A/C would use more gas when it’s on. How could this be so?
Signed, Uncool in Union City

Dear Uncool:
It’s actually aerodynamics working against you. You’re creating more drag with the windows down when traveling on the freeway, so the result is more fuel usage. It’s recommended to leave the A/C off in town and roll the windows down. When traveling at higher speeds leave the windows up and use the A/C and enjoy the ride. You’ll save gas and arrive calm, cool and collected.

Jeff Joyce has been the Manager of Express Oil Change & Tire Center since 2004. He can be reached at 925-254-8989 or jjoyce@orindamotors.com

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