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Looking Good in Lamorinda

By Moya Stone



Ball gown designed by Charles James in 1953. Part of the High Style exhibit at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. Photo courtesy the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

the proprietor of Orinda Village Antiques and for years now she has been offering presentations on the English tea ceremony. A British-born interior decorator, Leech knows all the dos and don'ts of tea traditions as well as setting a fine-looking table. While serving a full afternoon tea including tea sandwiches and scones, Leech discusses the history of tea and all the fascinating customs of tea taking from around the world. She uses antique table settings from her store to create a charming and rare ambiance. Leech's tea presentations are popular with people from around the Bay Area, school children, and various organizations including the Stanford Women's Club of the East Bay.

Orinda resident Laura Kaufman says that she and other club members enjoyed coming up with vintage outfits appropriate for an elegant afternoon tea. "Several of us had items that belonged to mothers or grandmothers," says Kaufman. "Traditions such as wearing gloves and using formal table manners seem so far behind us now, though still familiar. We felt like we were inside Downton Abbey." Contact Susan Leech for more information at (925) 254-2206.

Fashion Field Trip: Local fashionables and museum goers are abuzz about the current exhibit at the San Francisco Fine Arts Museums Legion of Honor. "High Style: The Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection" offers a broad and balanced view of women's fashions from the early to mid-20th century. The 125 selected pieces come from the vast collection at the Brooklyn Museum and include ball gowns and party dresses, sportswear and accessories. Examples to drool over are of French couture by Christian Dior, Jeanne Lanvin and Madeleine Vionnet as well as ready-to-wear by American designers Bonnie Cashin, Claire McCardell and Gilbert Adrian, among others. One room is dedicated to Charles James, a British expat who was known in the 1950s for hobnobbing with socialites and designing their ball gowns. It's a rare treat to view such impeccable craftsmanship up close. High Style is a must-see for anyone at all interested in fashion. On view now through July 19. For information, visit <https://legionofhonor.famsf.org/highstyle>.

Vintage Finds: If you find yourself in need of a hat or you're looking for some authentic '70s threads, check out the Alameda Point Vintage Fashion Faire coming up May 15 and 16 at 2701 Monarch Street in Alameda. Fifty dealers offer for sale vintage clothing and accessories from

Thanks to the unseasonably warm weather, my spring wardrobe has been in rotation since January and it's starting to feel a bit dull. I say, time for a fashion refresh. How about you?

Spring 2015 has a 1970s flavor with a return of the bohemian scene. Looks this season include maxi dresses, button-down shirts in white or denim, and a favorite of mine, the A-line skirt - a flattering and an easy choice to dress up or down. Since we haven't seen this silhouette in over a decade it's looking quite sharp. Accessorize any of these boho basics with a kerchief scarf, silver jewelry and a floppy hat, and we have simple chic.

Talking '70s, according to Specialtees Boutique in Lafayette high-wasted jeans and bell bottoms are back. Specialtees carries popular brands such as J Brand, Mother, Joes, and AG. As for prints, they're in - all of them: florals, polka dots and stripes, but perhaps not all in one outfit.

Take Tea in a Hat: It's the season of hats and what better an event to sport one than Susan Leech's Taking Tea in the English Manner. Leech is

Victorian to 1980s for men, women and children. Friday night is the VIP Early Buy Party with cocktails for sale and a Fabulous Fifties Costume Contest. Check out the website for more information: <http://alamedapointantiquesfaire.com/blog/vintage-fashion>.

Refresh for spring and go forth in style.

Moya Stone is a fashion writer and blogger at <http://overdressedforlife.com/>.



From left: Orinda residents Elva Rust, her daughter Barbara Ward, and Linda Landau Photo Laura Kaufman

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