

Roden, Taverna Pellegrini win Orinda business awards

By Sora O'Doherty

Both the Orinda Business Person of the Year, Maria Roden of Orinda Books, and the proprietor of the Orinda Business of the Year, Dario Hadjan of Taverna Pellegrini, are immigrants who have found success in Orinda and both will be honored at the annual Orinda Business Awards Dinner on May 8 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. This year the dinner will be at the Taverna Pellegrini, so those attending will get a real taste of the winner's accomplishments.

Roden of Orinda Books was brought up in England, but moved to the States 21 years ago when her husband's job brought them here. They have three children, now 30, 26 and 21. The youngest was just 6 months old when they made the move. When her children were grown, Maria went to work for Orinda Books. When the owner decided that it was time to retire after 37 years in business, Roden and her husband, who had just retired from Chevron, decided that the time was right and they bought the local bookstore.

Roden loves books and is delighted at the store's big, open space, which she uses for a multiplicity of purposes. She actively supports local artists by showcasing their work. There is an art reception once a month, and one wall of the store is dedicated to local art. A glass showcase displays the work of jewelry artists. Patrons of



Photos Sora O'Doherty

the Blue Egg Farm can order online and pick up their fresh organic vegetables, herbs, flowers, fruit, seedlings, and blue eggs from the bookstore. Orinda Books is open seven days a week, opening each day at 10 a.m. and closing weekdays at 6, Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 3, unless there is a special event.

"People thought I was crazy when I bought the bookstore," Roden says, but the bookstore is profitable and fun. "Orinda is a community that wants to keep its bookstore," she notes. Roden purchases all the adult books. She has a "fabulous staff," she says – all local, all well read. The bookkeeper has been with the store for 30 years. Schools buy books from Orinda Books, as does the Orinda Library. In turn, Roden donates to the school

the proceeds from an innovative project. The store receives a lot of books for review that cannot be sold per se. The books are wrapped in plain paper, and a staff member writes a little blurb about what the book is about. Patrons of the store are free to take a book and donate whatever they wish. The proceeds, which can be as much as \$100 to \$200 a month, are donated to the schools or other organizations.

Taverna Pellegrini proprietor Dario Hadjan was born in Iran, but left when he was 14 years old to attend boarding school in Italy. The school, St. Mary's, was located in Lago Maggiore, but is no longer there. From there he went on to the American University of Rome, where he earned a business degree. Always good with



people, Hadjan was a DJ in college at a local nightclub in Rome. He came to the States in 1988. After trying several places in California, south and north, he settled in the Bay Area and opened a few Italian restaurants: Pane e Vino, which he says was one of the most successful restaurants in San Francisco, Tiramisu, and Caffè delle Stelle. Hadjan currently runs Piazza Pellegrini in San Francisco and Taverna Pellegrini, which is the winner of the Business of the Year award. The restaurant features a wood-burning oven that Hadjan says would be the envy of every chef in Naples!

With the two restaurants, Hadjan says he works eight days a week. "I say, 'I have two wives, and many children,'" says Had-

jan, who is single. All of his chefs work with him creating new items and keeping the menu up to date. At least once a year Hadjan travels to Italy, where he has many friends. His favorite trip is to drive from Rome, up the coast of Italy to Lago Maggiore, the crossing over and returning on the opposite coast.

Active in the community, Hadjan sponsors a baseball team in Orinda. Taverna Pellegrini, opened in 2015, features happy hour from 3 to 6 p.m., with early dinner from 4 to 6 p.m. and dinner continuing to be served until 10 p.m.

The May 8 all-inclusive awards dinner costs \$35. Reservations are required and can be made on the chamber of commerce website: www.orindachamber.org.

PG&E to close St. Mary's Road for the summer ... continued from page A1

Serious impact is anticipated on Moraga Road and Moraga Way during the summer as residents go to and from Lafayette. One of the municipalities' first concerns is PG&E's outreach plan to those affected, so residents would not wake up one day and find their way

to work, to camp for their kids, or simply out of their neighborhood blocked all day, including Saturdays. Both municipalities pushed for robust outreach. PG&E proposed letters, phone calls, large electronic signs, one or more public information meetings, as well

as canvassing the most affected neighborhoods.

Regarding access for emergency and other utility vehicles, PG&E explained that if needed, the construction equipment would be removed from the road and the holes covered with plaques to permit access. Moraga council members were not satisfied that this would permit timely rescue in case of a medical emergency and asked that the possibility of using Saint Mary's College grounds and looking into a medical evacuation helicopter.

Other questions about deciding on this location were raised during the presentation, first by Lafayette residents Gina and Michael Dawson, and later echoed by some council members.

PG&E indicated that this section of pipe had to be replaced now because it dated back to the 1950s and needed to be increased in capacity because the population is

growing. The agency said that their main concern is safety and that the California Public Utilities Commission mandates that it replaces 20 miles of aging pipes every year, and that the mile under St. Mary's Road was on that plan for this year.

It was impossible, however, to get data from the agency showing signs of aging of this pipe over other old pipes in the area and it was not clear if it had been inspected since 1986. PG&E did not respond to this question in time for publication but stated that it has conducted hydrostatic pressure tests of more than 1,100 miles of gas transmission line and installed thousands of control points along its system to read pressure and flow rates and sent that information back to its state-of-the-art Gas Control Center located in San Ramon.

The other safety aspect of the new proposed pipe is that the emergency shut-off valve proposed so far only at Lucille Lane has to be closed manually in the case of an emergency, despite the fact that PG&E owns the technology to close valves automatically and remotely in case of an incident (https://www.pge.com/en_US/safety/gas-safety/safety-initiatives/valve-upgrades.page). At the April 26 Lamorinda joint council meeting a Moraga council member asked if demonstration of safety could be a condition given to PG&E to get the encroachment permit they need from both cities in order to start their work.

PG&E will obtain its encroachment permit from both public works departments and will then proceed with its construction plan; no further public discussion with the councils or commissions is required. The two public works departments will review the traffic plan, the repair plan for the road – which should include a complete slurry seal of that section of the arterial – hours of operation, and mobilization sites.

PG&E indicated that a place and date for an open house meeting for both communities had not yet been decided, and that there could be more than one meeting. The contact people from the PG&E who will respond to residents' questions will be listed in the letter residents are to receive.



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