

# Larry Swindell now with the stars he loved so well



Photo courtesy Julie Bookman-Swindell

Larry Swindell in front a picture of his younger self in the Rheem Theatre Hall of Fame

By Sophie Braccini

When Larry Swindell closed his eyes for the last time in his Moraga residence on June 23, a few days after his 91st birthday, one of the last witnesses and chroniclers of Hollywood's Golden Age was gone. Swindell had walked with Cary Grant, Colette Colbert, Carol Lombard, Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, to name just a few. He wrote five movie star biographies, some bestsellers, he taught numerous cinema and journalism college classes and contributed to many publications. Cinema, baseball, books and faith were the passions that drove his long and rich life.

According to Julie Swindell, the eldest of his five children, her father had his first heart problem at age 63, but this did not stop him from continuing living life to the fullest for almost another 30 years. One just had to step into

the Moraga or Orinda movie theater when he was introducing a classic movie for matinee viewers to feel his passion: for a while you were with Vincente Minelli directing "An American In Paris" or alongside John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara during the shooting of "The Quiet Man."

Swindell's memory was phenomenal in each of his three passions of baseball, books, and the movies – especially the early years of the American industry to the '60s. He could give the name of any professional baseball player and their entire stats, his daughter says. At his 91st birthday dinner a few days before his heart finally stopped during his sleep, he asked his assembled children to quiz him on movie stars and the most minute details of their careers, and he got everything right.

During the last years of his life, Swindell embarked on a monumental task of writing the history of American cinema from its early silent days; he had just finished the year 1942 when he died. His work included 1939, the year he considered the pinnacle of Hollywood Golden Age; his elder daughter is now tasked with finishing the huge document that Swindell viewed as a future reference manual for scholastic research. Julie Swindell is also editing her father's autobiography, "Naked on the Freeway."

Swindell leaves behind his second wife, Pat, their children and the many grandchildren on both sides that considered him their grandpa, and many friends. He was a very active member of the Moraga Kiwanis, and of the Historical Society, for which he was the editor of the El Rancho Moraga quarterly for 10 years. His friend, former council member Howard Harpham, remembers the weekly breakfasts every Monday morning with Swindell and Kirpal Khanna. At these breakfasts, they would discuss the previous Sunday's sermons at their respective churches, Swindell holding hands with the two of them and giving a blessing over pancakes and juice, always including Khanna's Sikh religion.

The movie scholar had had a very long and productive life before his Lamorinda days as a drama critic, film scholar, musical librettist, magazine editor, theatrical producer, teacher, movie biographer, baseball know-all, and book maven. The UCLA grad created the book review section at the Philadelphia Inquirer and was one of the eight founding directors of the National Book Critics Circle.

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# Moraga Lions Achievement Awards announced

Submitted by Dan Hagan and Ray Casabonne

Once again the Moraga Lions gave Achievement Awards to the following graduates of the local middle schools:

Orinda Intermediate School – Alexis Gottschalk, recommended by Jay Stevens counselor, parent Karen Gottschalk. Will attend Miramonte High School.

St. Perpetua - Nicholas Aiken, recommended by Heidi

Schwarck, parents Todd and Mary Pat Aiken. Will attend De La Salle High School.

St. Perpetua - Tatum Haggerty, recommended by Heidi Schwarck, parents Steve and Liz Haggerty. Will attend Carondelet High School.

Joaquin Moraga - Charles Stafford, recommended by teacher Robin Russell. Will attend Campolindo.

Joaquin Moraga - Halley Pearson, recommended by Teacher Robin Russell. Will attend Berean Christian High School.

Stanley - Juliette Jarotzky, recommended by counselor Tiffany Sullivan. Will attend Campolindo.

Stanley – Stephanie (Steph) Bouistani, recommended by Counselor Tiffany Sullivan. Will attend Acalanes High School.

Stanley - Cooper Carmichael recommended by Counselor Tiffany Sullivan, parent Terra Carmichael. Will attend Campolindo H.S.

Photos provided



Alexis Gottschalk



Nicholas Aiken



Tatum Haggerty



Charles Stafford



Halley Pearson



Juliette Jarotzky



Cooper Carmichael

# Local tennis players offer lessons to benefit Meals on Wheels

In response to COVID-19, Campolindo High School sophomore Jake Hammerman founded Impactful Tennis, an organization where four varsity tennis players from local schools give tennis lessons to

kids aged 7-13 with lesson fees going directly to local non-profit, Meals on Wheels Diablo Region. According to the Impactful Tennis website, Meals on Wheels had experienced a 40% increase in meal

requests due to the pandemic. They hope to raise \$10,000 for the nonprofit.

"We are so honored to be chosen by Impactful Tennis as its charity of choice," said Caitlyn Sly, executive director of

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region on the Impactful Tennis website. "It really means the world to us that the next generation of leaders is concerned about the challenges our elders face every day."

To learn more about Impactful Tennis, please go to [impactfultennis.org](http://impactfultennis.org).

-- J. Wake

**Community Service:** We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

## Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com), and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.