

Published August 5th, 2009

A Hidden Gem in the Orinda Hills

By Andrea A. Firth



Photo provided by Orinda Historical Society

Built in 1929, when mostly trees populated the Oak Springs neighborhood and just a few cottages dotted the hill, the effort to create a spring-fed pool for the benefit of the neighbors was spearheaded by longtime Orinda resident Nathan Gray. "[Gray] owned about 200 parcels and subdivided a lot of the hill," says Chris Flum, who grew up in the neighborhood and remembers hearing stories about the development of the area from Gray.

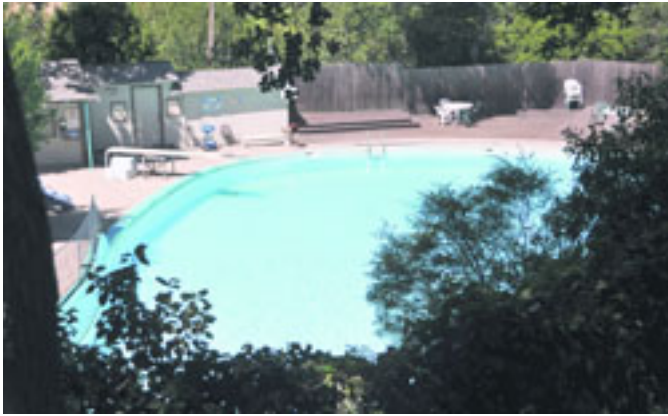
By the mid-1940's a clubhouse was added, a homeowners' association was formed, and the pool became the central meeting place for the growing community that had settled in the area. Kids' game nights and parent socials were all part of the draw. And rumor has it that in the early days, the sheriff, highway patrol, and other local officials would drop by the clubhouse during their breaks to do a bit of gambling.

"Back when I was growing up, it really was the mecca of the hill," recalls Flum. "It was a warm and friendly place," he adds, which is a big reason he joined the pool when he returned to the neighborhood to raise his own family. Flum also remembers that the starting blocks had to be strategically placed around the odd-shaped pool to ensure competitors at the swim meets each swam the same distance. Oak Springs Pool no longer supports a swim team, which is an attractive feature for members who appreciate the unrestricted access to the pool throughout the summer.

Solar panels were installed on the lot adjacent to pool in the mid-1980's long before being green was cool, and the pool is kept at a comfortable 80° throughout the season which runs from late Spring to early Fall. The clubhouse, which was updated along the way to include a fully-functioning kitchen, retains the charm of an old cabin in the woods with knotty pine paneling, single panel windows, a brick fireplace, and twinkle lights strung from the ceiling. For a modest fee, the clubhouse can be rented all throughout the year, notes Duffy. "People have used it for all sorts of activities from ballet and karate classes to African drumming, book clubs, and birthday parties." With 40 member families, Oak Springs Pool is never crowded. "We could probably grow to a hundred families, and it still would not have a negative impact," states Duffy who is working with the Board to increase the membership. As the Treasurer on the pool's Board, Duffy is acutely aware of the costs associated with maintaining the facility. "We don't want to lose this," she says. "We think it is important to keep this going."

Flum, who enjoys the space and solitude that the pool provides, agrees that membership needs to grow in order to adequately maintain the facility and provide the amenities people want, such as Wi-Fi which was recently added poolside. He is trying to bring back the game nights that he enjoyed as a child to share with his boys, seven year-old Gavin and nine-year old Phoenix. "I want to bring back that community feel," concludes Flum.

For more information about the Oak Springs Pool go to www.oaksspringspool.com.



Oak Springs Pool today Photo Andy Scheck

Reach the reporter at: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA