

Life in LAMORINDA

Raul Deju: A Man of Many Interests

By Sophie Braccini

The Deju family has a long history of adventures and risk taking that has its roots in the Old Continent, in the Basque region, a proud people with a language of its own.

Raul Deju's parents left Europe at the beginning of the 20th century and immigrated to Cuba. After Castro's revolution, young men that were reaching military age couldn't leave the country for ten years, so many young Cubans left under what was called the "Peter Pan Operation". Deju left Cuba at age sixteen, without his family. A physics teacher encouraged him to apply for a

scholarship to go to college. He was able to do so on a "work-study program." He earned a Bachelor's degree in math and a Ph.D. in Geology and Earth Sciences from the New Mexico Institute of Technology. He was able to sponsor his parents to come to the States, and he commenced a career in teaching and research.

Deju taught at the School of Engineering at the University of Mexico in the late 60's. He did research and was a consultant to the federal government at Hanford, a Department of Energy Nuclear Research Facility. When

he met Shari, his wife, he moved permanently to the West Coast, doing research on nuclear waste management.

In the early 80's he began his business career. "I like to do something different, something that has not been done before," he says. Working with partners, he built the first environmental science and engineering company in America, International Technology. Later, he participated in the building of Chemical Waste Management, Inc., a subsidiary of Waste Management Inc.

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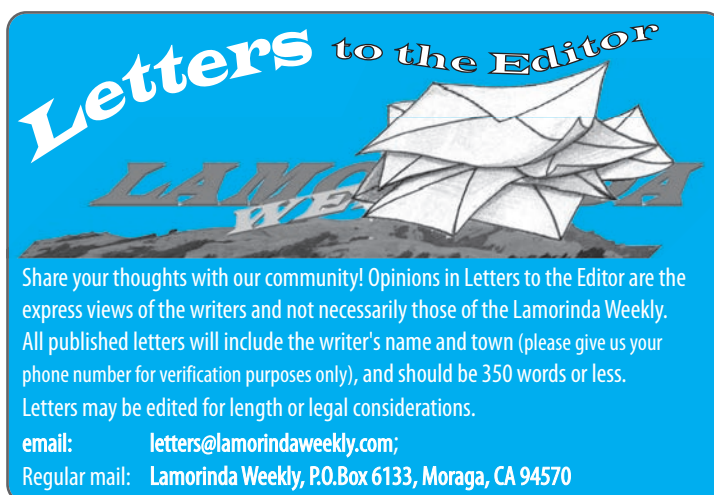
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Dear Editor,

During good times most levels of government spend every penny they can get their hands on. When the economy slows they have to cut vital services or borrow money. In the past Moraga has been more careful with the taxpayers' money. I am concerned that the arrival of the Palos Colorados funds has changed the responsible attitude of some council members. The town treasurer is predicting that by 2013 town income will not cover existing services. The Palos Colorados funds should only be used for essential services and to prepare us for the predicted future shortage. Building a gym would not only use funds that could be saved for the future but would also require ongoing expenses for maintenance and supervision. Building a gym or any other non essential facilities knowing that we will soon face a deficit would be very irresponsible. If a gym must be built it should be built next to a school where students could use it during the day and where maintenance and supervision infrastructure is already in place.

Pete Williams, Ivy Drive,
Orinda (Town of Moraga)

Dear Editor,

As we start the New Year with hopeful resolutions and renewed energy, I am moved to hope for something for my town. Moraga is a house divided against itself. Not only are the landowners and the Town Council unable to reach a working consensus, the Council is divided as well. Recently a second open space initiative was filed with the town, competing with the so-called "MOSO 2008" and re-opening the same debate that has been raging since the 70's in our town: should we develop or protect our open spaces?

I trust that the landowners and the town council have the best interests of Moraga and Moragans at heart. They are industrious and hard working. But for decades now they have been stuck in positions that haven't produced a good enough result. A divided council hasn't blocked the resolution of everyday affairs in our town, but business is conducted in a climate of confrontation. The Council, the business community and the landowners want to revitalize and develop the downtown. But for years, both sides have been unable to work out a common vision. The result is that while

Wood Burning, a Dirty Business

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Coffee ground log burning (from Moraga Hardware & Lumber)

Photo Sophie Braccini

But she warns that some areas are more susceptible than others to air pollution due to their geographic characteristics. In the winter, light winds at night and terrain blocking to the east and west do not allow much dispersion of pollutants. Lamorinda is considered part of the San Ramon Valley, which is characterized by its very narrow width, and could easily have high pollution buildups from emissions contributed by a freeway in its center and by emissions from fireplaces and wood stoves.

"That is why we wrote the first draft of a new regulation for wood burning and are in the review process. We'll conduct public meetings in January," says Schkolnick. "The proposed rules would ban all burning in fireplaces or wood stoves on "Spare the Air nights," she continues. Limitations would be set year round and open-hearth fireplaces would be banned in new constructions. Moraga passed an ordinance in 2002 mandating the installation of gas inserts in chimneys. But whatever the rules are to be, enforcement seems to be an impossible task with eighty inspectors for al-

most seven million residents and an estimated 1.7 million fireplaces and woodstoves.

"Our mission is more dissemination of information and education than fines," says Schkolnick, "most people want to do the right thing, they just do not know how bad this pollution is and what to do to reduce it."

In order to help people switch to gas inserts, BAAQMD is planning to establish an incentive program in the form of cash rebates with benefits from \$300 to \$600. For those who still want the feel of a real fire in the fireplace, the market has been offering alternatives that carry two redeeming qualities: the use of recycled material and the dissipation of much less emissions. "Coffee ground logs," that are made of leftovers from coffee shops and claim five times less PM emissions than wood; recycled paper pellets that claim to burn hotter and cleaner than firewood and other types of convenience fire logs with less carbon monoxide, fewer particulate emissions, less residue and more heat; or logs made of recycled wax-coated cardboard

our neighboring cities are developing and thriving, Moraga's shopping centers are aging while our sales tax dollars are still pouring down the hills in spite of efforts such as the "Shop Moraga First" movement.

We desperately need new ways of working together. I strongly believe that intervention is needed. Just as families sometimes need help to uncover new ways of dealing with power struggles, this town needs the intervention of an expert mediator. Good intentions go down the drain when protagonists can't get past old resentments and preconceptions. A mediator could be a new strategy to help get past the view that we are right and the opposing opinion is wrong. What is wrong is allowing ourselves to remain stuck in our positions.

We, the people of Moraga, can help by participating actively in our town's affairs. With freedom comes responsibility; be informed and stay informed. The Moraga Citizens Network sends emails detailing what is happening at future town meetings and explaining the background. Citizen involvement has changed the course of small and large governments throughout the U.S., and the Citizens Network offers to help Moraga realize its potential through the involvement of those who care the most—the people of Moraga.

This is a plea for hearing other peoples' opinions; we don't have to agree with them. In order for growth and change to occur we need to hear, really listen to opposing views with respect, and to be open to negotiation.

Janet Forman, Moraga

boxes, the material required by the USDA to transport fruits and vegetables to grocery stores.

The best way to be safe is to check www.sparetheair.org or call 800-helpair; you will get an instant air quality forecast and recommendations for spare the air nights.

**On January 1st,
BAAQMD sent out this
Spare the Air alert:**

Spare the Air Tonight,
Tuesday, January 1, 2008,
in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The air quality tonight is forecast to be unhealthy. The Bay Area Air District is asking residents to refrain from burning wood in their fireplaces and woodstoves, and to drive less.

You can help reduce winter air pollution if you:

- Postpone errands and link necessary trips
- Do NOT burn wood tonight.
- If you must burn wood, burn less and use only dry, clean, seasoned wood, and nonglossy white paper. Moist, or "green" wood smolders more, producing greater amounts of harmful air pollutants.
- Avoid any unnecessary driving, walk, use public transit or your bike instead.
- If you must drive, carpool and "triplink" your errands into one trip!