



Celebrating Valentine's Day without leaving Lamorinda turned out to be much harder than expected.

When the assignment came in, I thought: Piece of cake!

Literally. With bakeries, florists, gift boutiques, spas, new and established restaurants, movie theaters, and even a luxury hotel, what could be simpler?

Within 30 minutes, the list of choices was longer than the stem of any red rose I've ever had the good fortune to receive. With a price tag to match.

The article needed to be put on a diet.

I wrote the three names—Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda—on slips of paper. I wrote three budgets—\$25, \$50, \$250 and above—

on paper, and put them all in a hat. Several random draws later, I had a plan worthy of any New Year's trim-the-fat resolution.

Orinda paired up with \$25; Moraga with \$50, and Lafayette got the big budget at \$250 plus change. I figured tax was like a gift to the town and city coffers, so didn't count that as part of the tab.

With a cap of \$25, I tackled Orinda first, mistakenly regretting the slim budget would mean V-Day had nothing to do with victory.

Two of Sam's Very Messy Chocolate Cupcakes from Republic of Cake (\$2.75 each) satisfied the time honored-tradition of delving into all things chocolate. Ten percent of the cost went to support a local charity, making the purchase even sweeter.

For me, Orinda Books is like an open candy case to a sugar-holic, so finding a collection of love poems or a slim volume on travel to exotic locations was a cinch (\$10).

With the remaining \$9.50, an inexpensive bottle of wine from Bev Mo! was a possibility, but it lacked the truly local connection I was seeking.

Table 24, the new kid on the block, tempted me with the possibility of two iced teas (\$2.00 each) and an order of the luscious house corn bread (\$4.00), but left only \$1.50 for a tip.

Orinda Hardware came to the rescue, meeting almost any desire. Bird lover? Bird seed at \$3.99 a bag. Miss Fix-it? A \$1.99 flashlight for help in tightening a slip nut under the sink. There was even a cordless drill at \$9.97, leaving me only 47 cents over budget.

I felt flush as I descended upon Moraga with fifty dollars. That amount deserved to be spread from dawn to dusk. I decided. I started with breakfast at Terzetto's.

Valentine's Day falls on a weekday this year, so the \$4.99 special topped my list. Two eggs, two bacon, two slices of toast made for some pretty pairings. If I stuck to the organic breakfast blend coffee (\$1.75) a twosome could swing out of there for a sweet 16 bucks.

The chance to hang out at the Hearst Art Gallery's Civil War exhibit (\$4), with public hours Wednesday through Sunday, would have been an option on another day, but instead, a romantic

hike at no cost from Moraga Commons Park, to the Hacienda de las Flores and up the Mulholland Ridge filled the rest of the morning.

A pedicure at Anna Nails (\$20) in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center would leave just \$14, not quite enough for two tickets to a matinee (\$8 each) at the New Rheem Theatre.

But a bottle of polish from CVS (\$5), applied at home while watching a flick from the Red Box (\$1), allowed for a flowering plant from Moraga Garden Center (\$14) and two Caffè Cremosos at Ristorante Amoroma (\$7 each) to end the day.

It was open season in Lafayette, with \$250 and more to burn.

At Lafayette Car Wash and Detail Center a full detail (\$250) knocked down all the pins in one strike. This is for men and women whose vehicles are their sanctuaries and think they deserve to look like one.

Jewelry is a standard idea, but making it uncommon is simply a matter of visiting Ware Designs, where a low-end necklace or custom earrings will run \$150 and up.

I've always wanted to have a staycation at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. The Romantic Escape packages (\$209-229) were an obvious way to spend down the cash. Champagne, chocolate dipped strawberries, \$35 room service credit and a late check-out made this a perfect choice and left just enough dough for snacks from Diablo Foods. (Love that hummus, about \$5, or \$10 with chips.)

With all the momentum I built up exploring the wonders of Lamorinda businesses, it's lucky I didn't get a speeding ticket. Even a fool knows there's nothing ro-

mantic about spending Valentine's Day (and your budget) at the county courthouse. My advice? Take it slow, shop close to home, and love the one you're with.

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The Big Band is Back!

Submitted by Mo Levich



Photo Carry Korsgaard

Generations In Jazz is pleased to presents The Big Band Of Rossmoor on Feb 25th for a big band dance and concert at The Veterans Memorial Building. This is the first of the 2011 Big Band Dance and Concert series, and features vocalist Mary Anne Meltzer.

For those who have yet to see this 30 member big band the entertainment value is high. Join the generations spanning from 14 years to 92 years when the band plays the Great American Songbook from the 40's. From swing to slow the tunes will entertain you whether you dance or just listen, concert-style.

Rossmoor veteran musicians from WWII that played big band are joined by student

jazz musicians from Stanley Intermediate School, Campolindo High and Acalanes High. Come listen and experience this unusual event as the music bridges the generations.

Next, on April 8th The Big Band of Rossmoor will be appearing at The New Rheem Theatre on the big stage where many jazz greats have performed in years past.

On May 6th the band returns to The Veterans Memorial Building. This will be the final performance for Lafayette's own Erin Grant who will graduate from Acalanes. Erin will be featured on saxophone as Rossmoor seniors and her peers pay their respects to a wonderful young artist

and band member.

October 14th is the final big band dance of the season and will feature the arrangements of our own Frank Como. Frank served as Lionel Hampton's arranger in New York for over 20 years and wrote for the NBC Studio Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein as well as the Boston Pops.

All events begin at 7pm begin with complimentary dance lessons by Gail Enright. These events can be attended by either dancers or those who simply love the music.

Tickets to all events are available in advance from The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce or at the door. To reserve in advance call 284-7404.

Moraga Art Gallery's New Show

By Cathy Dausman



George Ehrenhaft and Beryl Glen-Reiland

Photo Cathy Dausman

Moraga Art Gallery began its "Two Artists, Two Visions: A Singular Experience" show featuring local artists Beryl Glen-Reiland of Orinda and Moraga's George Ehrenhaft with an open house January 15. The show runs through March 19.

Glen-Reiland, who began painting at age 14 in her native Scotland, is exhibiting a collection of landscapes, seascapes and flowers, and some pencil sketches. One such pencil sketch features Andrea Farrell who played guitar during the open house.

"I am not sure I have a favorite medium," Glen-Reiland says. "When I draw, paint, think and study art history, my life is ab-

sorbed in the beauty..." She is proud of the thriving Lamorinda art community: "We have within our grasp one of the best alliances of art in northern California."

Ehrenhaft took up watercolors in 1996 after retiring from teaching English on the East Coast. His display of local landmarks, including the Lafayette-Moraga Trail, St. Mary's College, Theater Square, and Mt. Diablo drew high praise from Indian Valley Elementary school art teacher Heloise Levy. Levy was drawn to Ehrenhaft's mixed use of dry and wet brush techniques, and was at the open house to make a purchase.

On his website Ehrenhaft says: "I usually do the same paint-

ing two or three times--until I get sick of it or get it right. Three out of four end up in the trash." While painting recently on the Moraga-Lafayette trail, a passer-by stopped to comment: "I never realized that the trail was so beautiful." That, said Ehrenhaft, made his day.

The Gallery includes work from about 18 artists, notes host John Diestler. Current media includes oil and watercolor paintings, photography, collage work and fused glass work and ceramics. Everything in the gallery is for sale.

The Moraga Art Gallery is in the Rheem Shopping Center, 570 Center Street. The gallery is open noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and is closed on Monday.