

Birds Stop for Man's Signs

By Cathy Dausman



Bird houses and animal decorations adorn the backs of many stop signs on Upper Happy Valley, Hidden Valley and Deer Hill roads. Photos Cathy Dausman

Greg Moeller may call himself a “hobo,” but he can’t stand homeless birds. Moeller has made it his mission to insure that cavity nesting birds have a high class place to call home, especially around his Happy Valley neighborhood.

Moeller, a retired CPA and Lafayette’s 2013 Citizen of the Year, first began repairing the backsides of stop signs about three years ago. After he cleaned and painted the gray, white or rusted backs while wearing “old, dirty clothes” (hence the “hobo” label), he hung a few birdhouses “to add beauty.” Since then, he estimates he’s decorated “50 to 75” sign backs with store bought or homemade bird houses, or put up “natural looking” decorations of quail, deer, owls, and squirrels.

The stop sign upgrades can be found sprinkled along Upper Happy Valley, Hidden Valley, Acalanes and Deer Hill roads. “I love it just painting [the signs],” Moeller said of the project he funds himself. “Everyone’s been extremely positive.”

He said some people have even asked for birdhouses in their neighborhoods. Parents tell him their children count the ones they see when driving in their cars. Moeller said he even spoke with Lafayette chief of police, Eric Christensen, about the project.

“He said as long as I’m not obstructing the sign [it was okay],” Moeller said. In the end, it seems even the birds – chickadees, tit mice, sparrows, swallows and wrens – obey the signs and stop along the route.



Greg Moeller attaches another home-made birdhouse to a waiting sign in Lafayette.

“Lady Windermere’s Fan” at Cal Shakes

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“Actors throw words away so that you’ll chase them, not so they get lost,” Smart interjected. And Moscone agreed, adding that speaking with too much emphasis is “wasted energy.”

Kitchens finds an organic way into the text’s convoluted passages: “I see a line that looks like a paragraph on the page and I analyze why she goes on and on. At times, it rides melodrama.”

Audience questions were sparse, but the panel’s answers, revealing.

Kitchens auditioned from Georgia via video tape. Her mother read the alternative roles for the “three hefty scenes” she submitted. Moscone said the key to Wilde’s

comedy is playing it like it’s not a comedy. Kitchens likened Wilde to Chekov, tossing ambiguity into the discussion. Smart suggested Wilde wrote about women in a parallel, timeless manner.

Moscone closed the event, promising Moore’s direction would “pull out (the characters’) modernity and make them no longer historical relics, but revelatory.”

“Lady Windermere’s Fan,” presented by California Shakespeare Theater, opens tonight, Aug. 14 and runs through Sept. 8 at the Bruns Amphitheater, 100 California Shakespeare Theater Way (off Highway 24), Orinda. For information, call (510) 548-9666 or visit www.calshakes.org.

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