

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, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

Local Author:

An Orinda Author's Obsession

New novel melds fact and fiction, shines light on silent film star

By Lou Fancher



Orinda author Robert Murillo Photo provided

Long before former stock broker and first time author Robert Murillo penned his debut book, "The Vanity," he was a 9-year-old boy, curling up with a radio. His imagination set aflame by sci-fi broadcasts and tales of quirky time travel, his childhood fever for fiction never diminished. Murillo will read from and discuss his novel at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 1 at Orinda Books. Joining him will be Thomas Gladysz, founder/director of the Louise Brooks Society – and several ghosts.

Yes, ghosts. Because Murillo has been haunted by Louise Brooks, a real-life silent film star, ever since he retired from his job as a Wells Fargo financial advisor in 2009.

"My original retirement plan was to learn to play golf and the piano. I also wanted to travel and write," he said.

Murillo had been a high school English teacher in Richmond for 11 years, prior to moving into the finance sector, so thoughts of writing didn't arrive out of the blue. Suzanne, his wife of 43 years, encouraged his ambition, suggesting a short story he'd written might have legs for a longer journey. Neither of them knew that Brooks, whose films and bobbed haircut inspired a moderate, but rabid fan base that continues to this day, would soon consume Murillo's thoughts.

"I got hooked," Murillo said. "I began to think, what if she wins the negatives back (the real life Brooks sued a photographer to retrieve risqué photos he threatened to release) and doesn't destroy them? And then, what if someone steals them from her?"

Murillo's dreams of shooting par-

faded to occasional outings with buddies; the antique upright piano became a dust bunny haven; travel meant descending their Orinda home's staircase to write for up to ten hours a day in "the dungeon." Murillo said he writes "until I lose my muse," which seemed quaint and even laughable, until he insisted she's real to him. "I call her Molly, because the name seemed to flow. When she takes off, I quit for the day," he said.

"The Vanity" is a blend of fact and fiction. Brooks' allure, jumping out of a 1927 snapshot Murillo saw, amplified itself into the story of Mike Lundy, a writer living in Brooks' former home – but in the year 2011. Time travel allows their lives to overlap and Lundy considers whether or not he should intercept the scandalous images and thus, alter destiny.

Murillo said he loves films, but if given a choice between a stack of DVDs and a stack of books, he'd chose the latter. "When you read, things happen in your imagination," he explained. "It's less the director's point of view and more your own interpretation."

He also chose to self-publish using CreateSpace, because of its close connection with Amazon. "They promote it and make it possible to have the book on your Kindle, your phone, or in your hand," he said. "The ease of buying a book on Amazon led me." It's a statement putting him in an awkward position, he admitted, because of his great devotion to independent bookstores. "As a book buyer, I go to Orinda Books all the time. I think there's room for both."

At Orinda Books, Murillo will speak about his writing process and Gladysz – who Murillo calls "the world expert on Louise Brooks" – will bring information about a movie Brooks made in Berkeley. A Q&A will follow, accompanied by "unbelievable refreshments" Murillo said will arrive courtesy of Suzanne.

After promoting "The Vanity," he plans to return to the dungeon. He'll be listening to Molly and working on "The Thirty-Third Floor," a collection of short stories based on his life as a stockbroker.

Celebrations

Fire and Wings – A Hot Burning Love Story

Two Campo grads celebrate the wedding of their dreams

With palm trees blowing in the breeze, on a sunny Sunday in October 2013, radio personality Heather Brittany and firefighter Brian Rankin tied the knot in a vineyard fête at the elegant Villa de Amore in Temecula, Calif., officiated by fellow firefighter, Steven Marcinko. One hundred and fifty guests traveled to this Southern California viticulture paradise from around the globe to celebrate. The couple placed love letters written to one another into a wooden box containing a bottle of their favorite vintage to be opened on their fifth anniversary.

The Matron of Honor was Jamie Zeimer York, their Moraga friend who has known them individually for over 18 years and re-connected the couple at her wedding. "They are both my best friends and if they were a bottle of wine, the label would read: This wine is the perfect balance of elegance, depth, and sweetness. Its robust flavors are intense, spicy, yet, smooth. Each sip of this complex blend will leave you wanting more, making it clear you are experiencing magic," stated Jamie. The Best Man was Brian's youngest brother, Michael, who kept the guests laughing with his gentle jests directed at his older sibling. Flowers for the tables and bouquets came from the brides' family Lamorinda gardens. "With great friends and four generations of family, it was the most perfect, beautiful, blessed day of our lives!" the happy couple chirped.

Heather and Brian enjoyed an exotic extended honeymoon in Japan and Thailand.



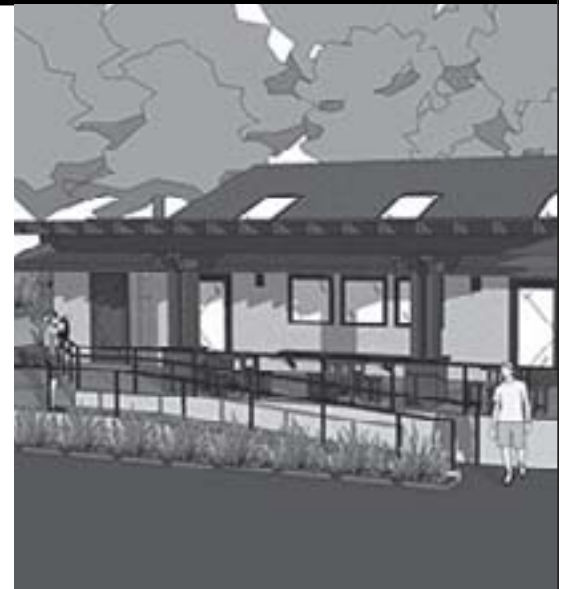
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