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## In Memory

### ELLY VASAK

November 6, 1920–July 9, 2015



Eleanor Grove Vasak, passed away, peacefully, on July 9, at Paradise Valley Estates in Fairfield, Calif. She was born and raised in Berwyn, Ill. Elly attended Morton Junior College and studied nursing at Northwestern University before meeting and marrying Otto Vasak, the love of her life. Soon after the wedding, Otto headed to England during World War II while Elly raised Nancy, their first child, by herself.

When WWII was over, the Vasaks welcomed son, Scott, followed by daughters Lacey and Debbie. Managing a family on the move became Elly's forte as they traveled to France, New Jersey, Iowa, and back to California. In 1964 Elly and Otto settled in Moraga. Along with her many domestic duties, Elly was active in the Moraga Historical Society, Friends of the Moraga Library, and Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church where she made many lifelong friends.

In 1997, Elly and Otto made their final move with Moraga friends to Paradise Valley Estates, a beautiful retirement community in Fairfield, Calif. A woman of wisdom, wit, and words, Elly joined a writers group and served as the Poet Laureate at Paradise Valley Estates. She published three poetry books over the years, each one reflecting a different stage of her life. Her poems were honest and funny, bringing smiles to the faces of friends and family.

Elly will continue to be an inspiration to family and friends alike. She was preceded in death by her loving husband, Otto, and is survived by her sister, Marian, her children Nancy Clemens (husband Paul), Scott Vasak (wife Geri), Lacey Thayer (husband Rob), Debbie (husband Doug), grandchildren James, Stacy (husband Scott), Sean, Christina (husband Rudy), Mike, Ryan (wife Rachel), Doug (wife Sarah), Stephanie, Neal (fiancé Vita), and Emily, and five great grandchildren, Liliana, Doc, Jeff, Johnny, and Fenton. Her ashes will be interred with Otto's at the Dixon V.A. Cemetery. A memorial reception will be held in the Den at Laurel Creek Health Center from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1. Memorial gifts in honor of Elly Vasak can be sent to the Moraga Historical Society.

### Lt. Col. Lloyd F. Childers, USMC (ret.) Ph.D.

June 4, 1921 – July 15, 2015



Lt. Col. Lloyd F. Childers, 94, passed away on July 15, 2015 in Moraga, Calif. Lloyd was born on June 4, 1921 in Norman, Okla., to parents Fred and Marie Childers.

Lloyd joined the US Navy in 1939. While assigned to the USS Cassin in Hawaii as a radioman, he survived the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He then served in the Pacific as a tail gunner in a VT-3 torpedo plane on the USS Yorktown (CV-5). Torpedo Squadron 3 was engaged in the historic Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942. Lloyd's plane was severely damaged by enemy fire and he was gravely wounded. When his machine gun jammed he used his service pistol to continue to fire on the Japanese Zero's. Of 12 torpedo planes, his was one of two planes from his squadron to survive the attack and return to the American fleet. His plane was so damaged it could not land on a carrier and ditched next to the USS Monaghan (DD-354). (Read the related story in the Lamorinda Weekly archives at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0809/Conspicuous-Bravery-The-remarkable-life-of-Lt-Col-Lloyd-F-Childers.html>)

For his heroism at the Battle of Midway he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart.

Lloyd met and married Mary Lorraine Sprouls in 1944. They had three sons. Mary died in 2009 and he married Junetta Dawson in 2010. She preceded him in death in 2013.

In 1945 he was commissioned as a Marine officer and assigned to fly combat missions in Korea in 1950 and 1951. He commanded Marine helicopter squadron HMM 361 in 1965 and 1966 in De Nang Vietnam. Lloyd received the Legion of Merit as well as his second Distinguished Flying Cross.

He earned a master's degree in Education and a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration at North Texas State University in Denton, Texas.

After a second career in administration at Chapman College, Lloyd retired in 1988 to spend more time on golf and with family.

Lloyd Childers is survived by his three sons Michael, Kenneth (Jacquie), and Bruce (Kitty) Childers, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Donations suggested for the Wounded Warrior Project.

## Saigon to the San Francisco Bay

A tale of two cities, 10 years in the making

By Cathy Dausman



Phuong Tran (far right) with her daughters and son-in-law in Ha Noi, in front of Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum.

Photo courtesy the Tran family

Moraga resident Phuong Tran's life has flowered in two countries. Tran (whose name means flower) and her family once led what she called an "easy life" in Saigon. With a banker for a father and a nurse for a mother, the family of three sisters and five brothers could afford a cook. Tran was a student at University of Saigon School of Law until 1975, when her life altered course.

North Vietnamese forces attacked Saigon at dawn April 30, 1975. Tanks stormed the presidential palace and the war came to an end, with North and South Vietnam becoming the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Tran dropped out of school to work full-time. Two of her brothers were beaten. The new government told its people that the U.S. was their enemy. When food and medications grew scarce, Tran learned firsthand "how hard is life for people who are poor."

Her family subsisted on nine kilos of rice a month and whatever fruit they could glean from backyard trees. "We were starving," she said. They sold their refrigerator, and eventually even the rice rations gave out.

After five years, they had nothing left to sell. "My dad was forced to re-

tire in 1976," said Tran. "My mom retired in 1980, the year we applied for an exit permit to the U.S. We lived on gifts and money my sister sent home (from the United States)," she said, but much of that never reached her family.

Tran found work a second time as an accountant at an import/export company, but the salary was meager and the company laid her off eight months later when she applied for her exit visa. Ten years later the Trans were still stuck in what was now called Ho Chi Minh City when the government announced it would accept exit visa applications. The day Tran and her mother joined the line at 5 a.m. she saw 1,000 others ahead of them.

Tran's mother was determined to succeed; by walking the building's perimeter she spotted a hole in the fence. Tran and her mother slipped through and went inside. A cleaning lady allowed the pair to stay after they bribed her with cigarettes. Tran, her husband, their two daughters, her mother, and a brother and sister finally left Vietnam in January 1990 – 15 years after the communist government took over.

They stayed three weeks in Thailand, living on \$49. When the Trans

arrived in San Francisco, the family had one single dollar left.

In June 1990, another brother immigrated to the United States. A third brother arrived in 1991. In all, Tran's sister, who arrived in the U.S. in 1969, sponsored 11 family members.

Tran learned English and attended Laney College, and then Mills College on a scholarship. She became a U.S. citizen in 1995.

Since then the Moraga resident has visited Vietnam three times. She first flew back to Vietnam in 2000 for her brother's wedding; in 2008 she returned to sell her family home. Last year Tran, her two daughters and son-in-law visited Vietnam.

"This was the first time my two daughters and I had a chance to visit Vietnam together. They had a chance to visit their dad's family after 33 years, met with their relatives, many of them for the first time, and enjoyed their courtesy. We had a great time visiting our homeland," she said, adding that her daughters "appreciated a chance to grow up and live comfortably here (in the United States)."

Her only wish is that "we still had South Vietnam as a country, like North and South Korea."

## Saint Mary's to Host California Teachers Summit

By A.K. Carroll



"With Common Core, the big goal is to prepare students to be college and career ready," said Adam Clark, assistant superintendent for the Liberty Union High School District. "Before we can make them ready, though, we have an obligation to teach our students [certain] skills."

Clark is one of five guest speakers who will discuss topics such as social-emotional learning and non-cognitive skills, culturally responsive leadership in a collaborative learning environment, and the universal importance of literacy as part of Better Together, a free teachers' summit that will be held from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. July 31 at the Saint Mary's College Kalmanovitz School of Education. The summit will take place concurrently at 33 locations across California and is expected to involve approximately 20,000 educators.

"This is work I've been doing since day one in education," said Clark, who received his administrative credential, teaching credential and master's degree from Saint Mary's. A former preschool teacher and middle and high school principal, Clark has run the gamut in the field of education. "[My talk] focuses on what [social-emotional education] is and why it's important for students to learn and for us to teach." Clark will share from his own experience as an administrator and an educator, and will discuss ways in which social-emotional learning can be seamlessly integrated into every day classroom activities.

His presentation will be one of three ED (in the style of TED) talks given by local education experts. The

lineup also includes education consultant and former superintendent of the Oak Grove Union School District, Kevin Harrigan, and curriculum coordinator for the San Ramon Unified School District, Kathleen Moore, who will be addressing the topic of universal literacy.

"This has been my focus for the past 30-plus years," said Moore, who did her doctorate on literacy in math education. "I see literacy as a social justice issue. It's at the core of everything we do ... and imperative for us to think about in all the different disciplines that we teach." Moore hopes her talk will inspire collaboration among educators. "One of the focus areas I'm hoping they walk away with is the idea that the structure of school may not change, but we can change the way we approach instruction. [We can] teach students that everything they learn is connected to something else."

The ED talks will vary from site to site. Uniform for the various locations, however, will be telecast keynotes from actress Yvette Nicole Brown and former NFL player-turned-NASA astronaut Leland Melvin.

A frequent guest on the talk show circuit, perhaps best known for her role on NBC's "Community," Brown is a champion of teachers who recently partnered with Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert on an initiative to fund education projects in South Carolina. A former co-chair of the White House task force charged with developing the nation's five-year STEM education plan, Melvin is passionate about equipping students with the skills they need to soar. An athlete,

astronaut, scientist, engineer, photographer and musician, he takes stories from his personal life to help inspire the next generation of explorers in their pursuit of science, technology, engineering, art and math. Having served on the International Space Education Board, Melvin is a key candidate for sharing his passion with today's educators.

The event is possible thanks to \$3.5 million in grants and the sponsorship of the Gates Foundation, the New Teacher Center, California State University, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

"SMC was selected as a host because of its stellar reputation in teacher preparation," said Michael McAlpin, director of media relations at SMC. "[It] is the only private college in the Bay Area to serve as a host for the gathering."

Better Together has been organized to equip and inspire area educators to take on all of the challenges that come with implementing California state standards while striving for excellence in local classrooms. The summit is targeted at administrators, teachers and teacher candidates working with students in grades PreK-12. Breakout sessions created by teachers for teachers will provide an open forum atmosphere in which educators can share practical and insightful strategies that are currently being implemented in classrooms across California.

"I'm hoping people will be able to find something useful regardless of their particular position or the community in which they serve," said Clark.

As an added incentive to attend, a 0.5 unit continuing education credit will be made available for the reduced cost of \$27.50. Those interested can register online at [www.cateachersummit.com](http://www.cateachersummit.com).