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Orinda hosts 3/4 Century Lunch, the celebration for 75s and better

By Sora O'Doherty



Lilly and Raim Regelson were the longest married couple at the luncheon. Photo Sora O'Doherty

ones in the country honoring people 75 years of age and older.

One hundred people attended the Orinda luncheon, ranging from "baby" of the year Nancy Donovan to the eldest woman, "queen" Elva Rust, who at 99 years old seemed to have a pretty good time. Reigning "king" George Jedenoff was recently featured in a YouTube video called Happiness about still skiing at 99 1/2 years old: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3QXbS_NJ74.) The longest married couple, Raim and Lilly Regelson, got hitched in 1946 and have been together for 71 years.

In addition to the meal, attendees heard from three speakers on the Summer of Love, which happened 50 years ago in 1967. Jay Lifson, executive director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, talked about attending 278 Dead Head Concerts, while Tom Steele, who was director of merchandising for the Grateful Dead, attended 432 of the band's concerts, and spoke enthusiastically about the era of Timothy Leary, Ram Daas, Alan Ginsberg and bands including the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother & the Holding Company. LSD, protests against the Vietnam War, "tune in, turn off, and drop out," and the birth of the environmental movement marked the period that he said was brought to a screeching halt at the end of the '60s, following the deaths of luminaries such as Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, Jimmy Hendrix and Janice Joplin. The dark sinister side of the period cheerfully begun as the Summer of Love brought it to a close.

Pastor Ray Wells, who was responsible for convincing famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright to build Pilgrim Congregational Church in Redding in 1958, brought the proceedings to a close speaking of his experiences running a church in the Haight Ashbury district of San Francisco during the Summer of Love.



From left, "King" George Jedenoff and John Fazel. Photos Sora O'Doherty

In the year 2000 John Fazel introduced to Orinda an idea from his native Perry Iowa: an annual luncheon for residents who had achieved their three-quarter century. In his little town of 5,000, Fazel grew up with his mother taking her mother and stepfather to the annual event, which started in Perry around 1930.

Later in life, Fazel saw the world around him as so youth-centric, that he decided to do something about it. So he started up a Three-quarter Century Lunch in Orinda.

Sponsored by local groups, including Fazel's employer Better Homes & Gardens Realtors, Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary and the Orinda Community Church, the lunch is provided free of charge by volunteers from the Orinda Chamber of Commerce and the Orinda Association, who prepare and serve the food. This year's lunch was the 18th since its inception. Since the club in Perry ceased to operate, the Orinda club is one of the only remaining



"Queen" Elva Rust, 99 years old.

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[back](#)

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