

Posted on Fri, Sep. 02, 2005

## Team makes splash as first in its division

By Randolph L. Tom

Editor's note: Randolph Tom is a new monthly columnist for the Contra Costa Sun who will write about his views on life in Lamorinda. This is his debut column.

AS A DIEHARD native New Yorker, coming from the city to the rural-like Moraga was one "big shock and awe" to me.

As my fourth summer in Moraga comes to a close, I remain somewhat out of place in this world of grass, bike lanes and fourth bore discussions of the Caldecott Tunnel.

More important, I wondered what happened to the custom of sending kids to summer camps. I now realize that the summer sleep-away respite that East Coast parents secretly (but gladly) spend \$8,000 to \$15,000 per child for is replaced by West Coast (Lamorinda) parents with swim meet competitions.

While cheaper, this activity is equally challenging for beleaguered parents, seeking to have their kids learn the valuable lessons of teamwork, practice and responsibilities.

This summer was different from the prior three as our pool club was undergoing inevitable changes: the last year of our beloved swim coach and the ensuing search for his replacement coupled with the need for massive and costly pool renovations and the continuous uncertainty of where we place in the county's Orinda Moraga Pool Association, or OMPA.

I had the opportunity to witness once again the crazed dedication of the OMPA contestants and their supportive parents. As our children move gracefully from breaststroke to fly, one must be physically present at this Lamorinda summit to observe all the work and effort that goes into this event. The coordination, dedication and leadership required by the club membership are simply remarkable. (I must admit to some bias since my sister-in-law is president of our swim club; thus, enlisting, or rather engulfing, a good portion of my wife's time.)

The volunteers set up tents, make fruit salads and do 101 other things simultaneously in some chaotic, but determined, efficiency.

Like my nine other siblings, who are also so unskilled, I regret that I never learned to swim, but it is not for the want of trying. I was determined that my kids be "water-safe" -- just to make certain that they could save their old man if we were ever on a sailing boat or if I fell off a pier.

During the beginning of the swim season the kids train hard, perfect their strokes and pursue the popping of their times. All through this time, the neighborhood swim club volunteers work like demons, working like a team completing their initial public offering.

Alas, the big event occurred last week and our team -- a runt among the larger clubs -- finished first in their division, rewarding the kids and parents for their efforts.

I must confess that I watched in delight as I saw the joy in the kids' eyes from swimming in heats and completing a job well-done. Thankfully, I can save my cheering voice for next season.

Oh! Did I hear someone say, "Soccer sign-up?"

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