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MONTECITO MISCELLANY

by *Richard Mineards*

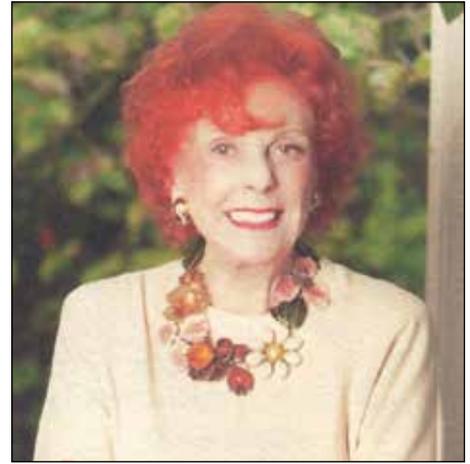


Richard covered the Royal Family for Britain's Daily Mirror and Daily Mail before moving to New York to write for Rupert Murdoch's newly launched Star magazine in 1978; Richard later wrote for New York magazine's "Intelligencer". He continues to make regular appearances on CBS, ABC, and CNN, and moved to Montecito seven years ago.

Ridley-Tree Belle of Birthday Ball

Titian-haired altruist Leslie Ridley-Tree celebrated a major landmark birthday when 55 friends turned out at the Biltmore to laud the philanthropist, who, over the decades, has donated millions of dollars to Santa Barbara causes – including the Museum of Art, Cottage Hospital, City College, Westmont, UCSB, the zoo, the symphony, and the chamber orchestra.

The laudatory gala in a private room at the Four Seasons hostelry, hosted by six of out tony town's top ladies, including Anne Towbes, Sally Jordan, Christine Emmons, Deanna Dehlsen, Hiroko Benko, and Anna Grotenhuis, brought together a torrent of oh-so tony types, including Dolly Granatelli, Jelinda DeVorzon, Teresa McWilliams, Mireille Noone, Mary Collier, Kate Firestone, Caroline



Leslie Ridley-Tree, one of Montecito's great philanthropists, celebrates a major birthday in style

Thompson, Marlene Veloz, Dilling Yang, Starr Siegele, Marilyn Gevirtz, Corinna Gordon, Val Montgomery,

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MISCELLANY (Continued from page 6)

Alex Nourse, Lynda Weinman, Hollye Jacobs, and Merryl Brown.

Opera legend Marilyn Horne, who runs voice classes at the Music Academy of the West, flew in from Hawaii, Lisa Wolf from New York, and a number of other close friends from Virginia for the boffo bash.

After dining on Dungeness crab and Scottish salmon salad, the bounteous

birthday belle cut the giant coconut chiffon birthday cake with coconut custard filling and meringue icing with coconut flakes.

The undoubted highlight of the event was a serenade by Dream Foundation founder, Thom Rollerson, Bobby Lesser, Dan Gunthere, Rod Lathim, and Rob Grayson, including a re-worked version of the Broadway

hit *Mame*, with lyrics written by Anne Towbes.

"We rehearsed four times," says Rod, a theater director and producer. "As well as 'Mame', I sang 'Someone to Watch Over Me', and together we sang 'One' from *A Chorus Line*. Thomas sang 'I Get a Kick Out of You', Bobby sang 'You're The Top', Dan 'I'll Be Seeing You' and Rob 'On The Road Again', all favorite pieces of Leslie."

Leslie, elegant as ever in an ivory two-piece ensemble, was in her element.

One of our rarefied enclave's great dames, without a doubt!

Journalism Gem

Dania Maxwell, who was educated at Montecito Union and Santa Barbara High, has morphed into an accomplished photojournalist in Florida.

Dania, 30, is the daughter of Montecito developer and realtor Jack Maxwell and a highly respected shutterbug for the *Naples Daily News*, specializing in what she terms "documentary stories."

One of her recent projects was the story of a 10-year-old boy, who died last month from a deadly form of brain cancer.

"The doctors didn't give him long to live, but between the chemotherapy and radiation sessions, the boy and his mother set about helping him



Dania ready for action with trusty camera

complete as many items for his bucket list as possible," says Jack. "He took a cross-country trip to California and back, got his first kiss and became an honorary marine. Dania and her colleague, writer Jessica Lipscomb, chronicled it all as the family reached milestone after milestone.

"Their write-up, about a life on deadline, ran as a three-part series last month. It was joyous but bittersweet."

"It all started with a six-day climb up Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania with my father and my brother, Alexander, in 2001," explains Dania, who also attended City College and New York's Sarah Lawrence College, majoring in anthropology.

"The climb was grueling and rewarding, and I still think of it today.

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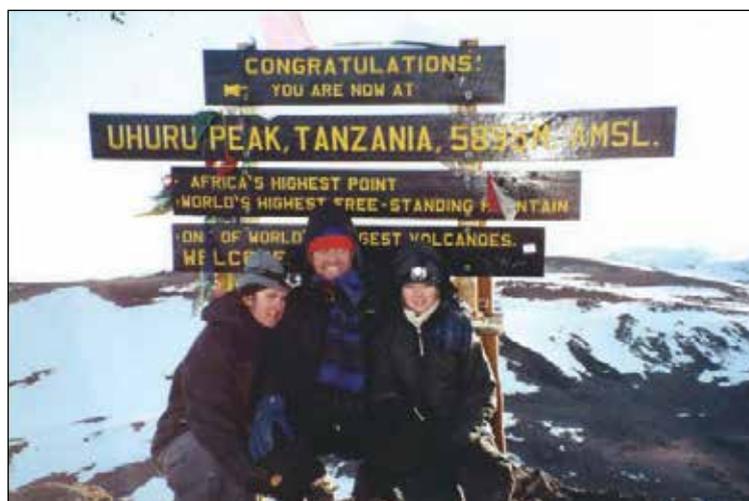
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MISCELLANY (Continued from page 18)



Dania with her father, Jack, and brother, Alexander, at the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro

I'm not sure if it's true, but our group leader told us I was the youngest American female to take the hike."

Having reached her peak, Dania took a teaching position at a private international school in Shanghai, China.

"I thought I'd stay for another year, but I wanted to pursue photography and it would have delayed my goal. I moved to San Francisco in 2007, working as a waiter at night and taking journalism courses during the day."

Dania's first story, working at the Missouri Photo Workshop a year later, was on a young girl coming of age in a very racist environment.

"Her father hung a KKK flag in his home, her brother had white supremacy tattoos on his arms, and her next-door neighbor was a member of the KKK and the Third Reich. The experience of covering this was pivotal for me. I discovered how a photo story that documents something really happening in our world can initiate conversations and springboard changes."

At the workshop, *National Geographic* photographer **Randy Olsen** was Dania's editor and suggested she consider a graduate school for photography. An interview at Ohio University was duly arranged, and she was accepted in September 2009.

"I met a great group of students, which encouraged me to be a better photo-journalist in all the right ways."

The biggest story Dania worked on before her move to Florida two years ago was about a family separated because the mother had been deported.

"She had been living in Bend, Oregon, for 21 years and her identity was discovered after she applied for political asylum. I followed the mom after she was deported to Mexico and the kids, too. The story was printed in *USA Today*."

A great deal of positives from innumerable negatives...

Oprah's Pryor-ity

Former TV talk-show titan **Oprah Winfrey**, having got commendable notices acting in **Lee Daniels' *The Butler*** last year, will play a violent brothel-running grandmother of leg-

endary comedian Richard Pryor in an upcoming biopic.

The 60-year-old Oscar nominated actress will take on the role of Marie Carter, who was known to beat her grandson while raising him at her brothel in Peoria, Illinois.

The comedian's widow, **Jennifer Pryor**, says longtime Montecito resident Oprah was eager for the role after getting hold of the script.

Last week she shared an Instagram showing herself with director Daniels and actor **Mike Epps**, 43, who will portray Pryor, at a first reading.

Epps beat out **Nick Cannon**, **Marlon Wayans**, and **Michael B. Jordan** to play the comedian in the highly anticipated biopic.

There has been no word yet on who will portray Pryor's widow, who is also producing the film, according to TMZ.

Casting rumors have mentioned **Kate Hudson** and **Anne Hathaway** as frontrunners for the role.

Pryor's mother, Gertrude, was a prostitute in his grandmother's brothel and she abandoned him when he was just 10 years of age.

He was raised primarily by his grandmother, Marie Carter, who was known for being a violent woman who would beat him as a child.

Pryor was a comedy legend known for his profanity-laced stand-up routines, his Grammy-winning comedy albums and also for his 1970s movies, including *Silver Streak* and *Car Wash*.

The Blazing Saddles co-writer infamously set himself on fire in 1980 while freebasing cocaine. He suffered a heart attack and died in December 2005....

Two-sport Titleholder

It has obviously been a very good year on the golf course for former tennis ace **Jimmy Connors**.

Earlier this year, as I exclusively revealed here, the 61-year-old, who won eight Grand Slam singles titles, hit two holes-in-one in consecutive weeks in April, a unique occurrence according to longtime members of the Montecito Country Club.

And now, for the second time since 2009, Jimmy has hoisted the club's



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Former tennis champ Jimmy Connors wins men's championship at Montecito Country Club for a second time

men's championship trophy, having shot an impressive 234 in three rounds, beating another two-time club champion, **Chris Gregoire**, by four strokes. There were 40 members playing the championship.

"Jimmy is one of the hardest-working golfers at the club," says pro **Scott Johnson**. "He's willing to put in a lot of time and effort to do what it takes to win. It is no wonder he plays off a single handicap."

The impressive engraved trophy dates back to 1948...

Just Breathe

Oscar winner **Jeff Bridges** says he and his wife of nearly four decades, **Susan**, have a wonderful technique for defusing family tension.

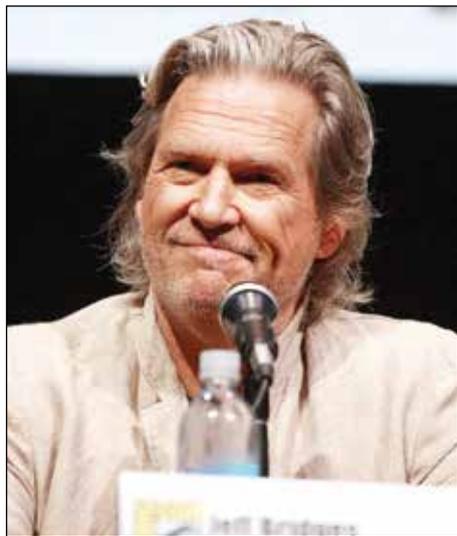
The actor, who turns 65 in December, says the twosome, who have three daughters, sit face to face with one of them talking, while the other listens, with no interruption.

Then they switch.

Zen Buddhism is another outlet that offers Jeff balance, he tells the new issue of *AARP* magazine.

He tries to meditate daily. Among the precepts of the religion, he notes, is that no one escapes getting old, illness, or death.

"I've got two conversations going on in my heart," he explains. "One



Jeff Bridges reveals his secret for a happy family (photo by Gage Skidmore)

says, 'Hey, you've got a lot of stuff you want to do, man. Now's the time because you're going to kick the bucket pretty soon. The other says, 'Oh, Jeff, you want to make the rest of your life a giant homework assignment? Just relax, man. Just relax.'

"I've got both these pulls from opposite poles. But I guess it's like breathing. You inhale, you exhale, and you get on with it."

Changing of the Guard



Scott Cordle, new resort manager at the San Ysidro Ranch

Scott Cordle started working at the San Ysidro Ranch as a bartender at the Plow & Angel before rising through the ranks as manager of the quaint cellar eatery and its fellow restaurant, The Stonehouse, above.

Now 16 years on, Scott, 50, has been promoted to resort manager, replacing longtime managing director **Seamus McManus**, who has moved to the Napa Valley.

"It's the perfect spot," Scott tells me. "I love the people and you can't beat the location."...

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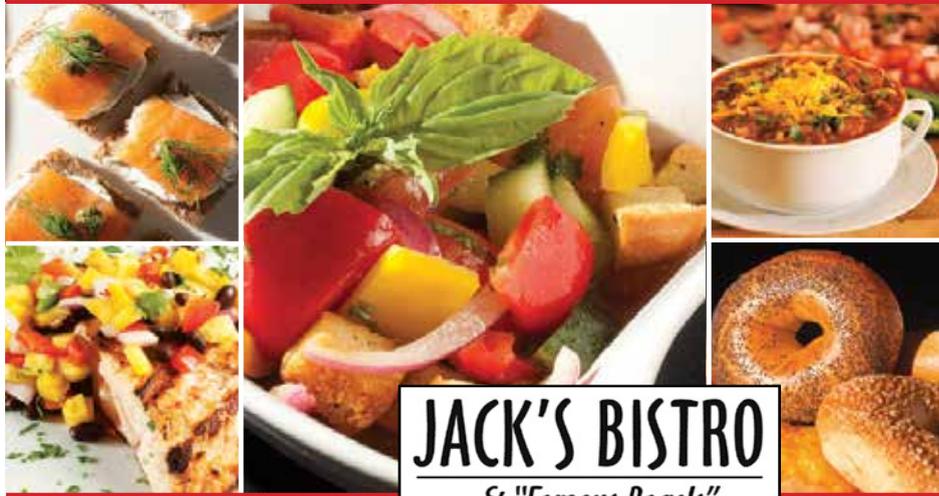
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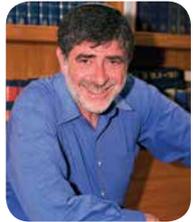
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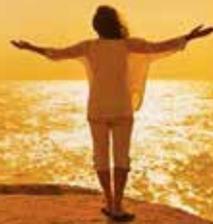
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MISCELLANY (Continued from page 31)

Boys to Men

Former world-champion surfer **Shaun Tomson** has thrown down the gauntlet to young people.

Shaun and his wife, **Carla**, suffered a major loss when their 15-year-old son, Mathew, died in a family tragedy in 2006.



Shaun Tomson launches 100 Wave Challenge

"He was taken from us because of poor choice," says Shaun. "I wrote my latest book *The Power of I Will* as a way to express my love and gratitude for this wonderful life and propel myself forward with a mission of helping young people make positive choices."

To that end, Montecito-based Shaun is supporting the Boys to Men Foundation, a southern California organization which helps fatherless boys with mentoring to prepare for adulthood, and is participating in the 100 Wave Challenge at Mission Beach in San Diego on Wednesday, September 20.

"I will be catching a hundred waves in twelve hours and raising \$10,000 because I believe in this program.

"It's a lot to catch," he tells me from London, where he is making a keynote speech for a large bank and, he sadly notes, missing some of the best swells in decades.

"In a normal surf session of two hours, you might catch 20 waves, so it is a lot of paddling and riding to get

100. Luckily, I have my five-year-old son, **Luke**, to help me!"

If you care to help Shaun in his fund raising, connect to Shaun Tomson's 100 Wave Challenge page...

All on the Table

The current drought is having a major impact on the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County.

The non-profit, which throws its third annual Table of Life gala at the Pacifica Graduate Institute's Summerland campus on October 5, faces much-increased costs.

"It is going to add around \$140,000 to our budget, which feeds 120,000 individuals through 320 charities annually," **Matthew Neal**, director of strategic giving, told me at a pre-event soirée at the Lark in the Funk Zone, hosted by owner **Sherry Villanueva**.

"We spend about \$800,000 annually, but the drought is going to cause a huge impact for us."

Last year's Table of Life event raised around \$200,000.

"This year we're hoping for \$250,000, given the increased costs to our budget because of the water shortage," adds Matthew.



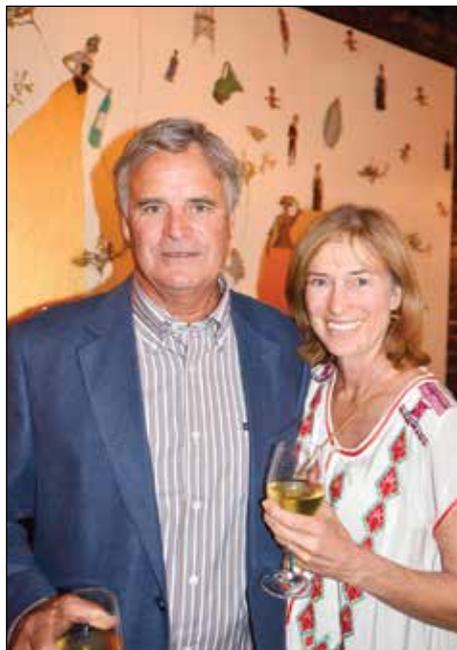
Daisy Stelzer of Vita Explorer and Foodbank sponsor and Matt Neal of Foodbank (photo by Priscilla)



Honorary event co-chair Marybeth Carty with Stephanie Sokolove, keynote speaker, and Arlene Montesano, co-chair (photo by Priscilla)



The Lark's hostess and owner, Sherry Villanueva, with appetizers for Christopher Teasley and Stephen Singleton (photo by Priscilla)



Garland and Brenda Reiter, Table of Life Driscoll's honorees (photo by Priscilla)

The gala, with **Marybeth Carty** and **Arlene Montesano** as co-chairs, honors **Chuck** and **Missy Sheldon**, and Driscoll's, the largest multi-berry producers in the world...

Summerland Sun

Hotel magnate **Pat Nesbitt** threw open the gates of his sprawling estate, Bella Vista, to host the Summerland Winery's 10th annual "Under the Harvest Sun" wine club party which has raised more than \$200,000 over the past decade since its launch by Turkish owner **Nebil "Bilo" Zarif**.

More than 300 guests watched a round-robin featuring players from the Santa Barbara Polo Club just a short gallop down the road, including theatrical producer **Jonathan**

Burrows, entertainment attorney **Leigh Brecheen** and **Pat**, before digging into the ample barbecue and quaffing the many varieties of wine.

"The support is really exceptional, and the event has gone from strength to strength," says **Bilo**, chatting with *Spin City* and *Melrose Place* actress **Heather Locklear**.

Ubiquitous KEYT-TV senior reporter **John Palminteri** shared live auction duties with actor **Billy Baldwin**, with a week's Caribbean escape in Anguilla and St. Martin, a stay at the Ritz-Carlton in Bachelor Gulch, Colorado, a yacht cruise in Turkey, a safari in South Africa, and a vacation in Punta Burros, Mexico, among the luxury lots.

The event is expected to have raised around \$100,000 for Summerland School and the six-year-old Los Angeles-based charity, Just Imagine It – which decorates hospital rooms for long-term child patients...

Wood-less Winners

It was a week of mixed emotions for Texas energy tycoon **Scott Wood**.

Nursing a painful rib injury, he was unable to play in the final of the Bombardier Pacific Coast Open at the Santa Barbara Polo Club, but his team, ERG, carried off the century-old trophy for the second consecutive year after beating Dallas dynamo, **John Muse's** Lucchese team, a three-time winner of the coveted title, 12-10.

Fortunately **Scott**, who is based in Houston, was well enough to host his third annual End of Summer bash for 300-plus guests at the Carpinteria

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Stefan and Irina Hearst, host Scott Wood, Michael and Anne Towbes, Charles Ward, and Emily and Justin Kellenberger (photo by Priscilla)

Annette Caleel, Kendall Conrad and David Cameron, Barry and Jelinda DeVorzon, Chris and Mindy Denson, Music Academy of the West president Scott Reed, Victoria Firestone, Henry and Rita Hortenstine, Chuck and Margarita Lande, Peter and Mireille Noone, Alan and Tanya Thicke – who has just had his Canadian reality TV show renewed for a second year, club president Dan and Linda Walker, Charles Ward, Bilo Zarif, Leigh Brecheen, Griffin and John Dellaverson, sheriff Bill Brown, Jeff and Hollye Jacobs, Justin Klentner



Alan and Tanya Thicke with Bilo Zarif (photo by Priscilla)



Wayne Siemens, Margarita Lande, Sharol Siemens, and Chuck Lande (photo by Priscilla)

club, organized by Montecito event planner extraordinaire **Merryl Brown**, with a Moorish nomad theme, catered by the Biltmore and a highly ener-

gized eight-piece band for the invitees, including **Frank Caufield, Robert and Robin Fell, Bill and Sandi Nicholson, Mike and Anne Towbes, Richard and**

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Peter and Mireille Noone, Robin Fell, Michael DeVorzon, Jelinda DeVorzon, Barbara and Barry DeVorzon (photo by Priscilla)



Kendall Conrad, Bob and Robin Fell (photo by Priscilla)

and **Amanda Masters**, and **Jeep Holden** and **Sharon Landecker**...

Looking Back at Lady Di

It is hard to believe it is 17 years since Princess Diana left us for a more heavenly destination after her tragic car accident in Paris.

I was sailing in Dark Harbor, Maine, when I returned to my host's house after a wedding reception to find a staggering 81 messages on his answering machine,

The first was from NBC anchor, **Tom Brokaw**, asking for an interview on Diana's demise.

I had last seen the former HRH two months earlier at a socially gridlocked reception at Christie's, the New York auction house, just 24 hours before a selection of her evening gowns was sold off for charity, which I was covering for ABC and CNN.

In the ensuing six weeks, I appeared on more than 80 TV talk and news shows in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

It was a time I will never forget...

Rivers Recuperating?

On a personal note, my thoughts are with my old friend and colleague, **Joan Rivers**, whose eponymous TV talk show I was a regular on-air contributor on for four years in the late 1980s, as well as its USA cable network spin-off, *Gossip, Gossip*.

As you've no doubt read, the 81-year-old caustic comedienne is in New York's Mount Sinai Hospital after she stopped breathing during vocal-cord surgery and went into car-

diac arrest. Her future state is currently uncertain.

Joan, who was a near neighbor on Manhattan's Upper Eastside, invited me to her magnificent pad off Fifth Avenue a number of times. As she once quipped: "This is what Marie Antoinette would have lived in if she'd had money!"

Here's to a quick and safe recovery...



Richard Mineards with Joan Rivers at the CBS studio in New York, where he taped the comedienne's popular talk show regularly for four years

Sightings: Former presidential candidate **Ross Perot** loading up on fresh-cut flowers at the downtown farmers market...**Bo Derek** lunching at Tre Lune...U.S. House of Representatives minority leader **Nancy Pelosi** with **Lois Capps** in the private dining room at Trattoria Mollie

Pip! Pip!

Readers with tips, sightings and other amusing items for Richard's column should e-mail him at richardmineards@verizon.net or send invitations or other correspondence to the Journal

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