

# Camp Meeker Beat

By Tom Austin  
taustin660@comcast.net



No major news this month. A little rain, a little sun, a nice quiet February. There was a fine community potluck at which visitor Patricia lost her cell phone. If you found it, email me at taustin660@comcast.net and I will hook you up.

Overheard while on line at the video store: "If you come to a sign that says 'Camp Meeker,' you've gone too far."

Yep, that's us, just a step and a half beyond normal: the three hundred-odd residents of Camp Furthur. Well, I'm sure some of us are not odd. One day I will meet one. I certainly don't meet them at the video store, where every ring of the doorbell brings one or more of my lovably eccentric neighbors. Holding court at the center of it all like irascible Harvey Keitel in "Smoke" is Dan Candib, Occidental Video's owner and the guest of honor in this month's roast – er, column. Apologies in advance, Danny. But you had it coming for "Ball of Wax."

I know this is a Camp Meeker column, and Danny's store is technically Occidental in geography as well as name. But bear with me here: OxVid is, well, on the ne'er do well side of town. The side closest to The Meek. If you walk out his front door, it is only a few steps past the dentists' office, and you are in the forest. Camp Meeker is in the forest. Therefore, ergo, and ipso facto, I claim the video store in the name of Damp Sneaker!

I digress. My comparison to the cigar store in "Smoke" was not facetious. As with that Brooklyn purveyor of humidoria, Danny's video joint is a community hub. After we conduct our business on the Negri side or the Gonnella side, we stop at the video store before repairing to our various hovels to wait out the winter night. Clutched in our collective claw we hold a passel of movies to fortify us in our hunkering down to outwait the darkness and the damp.

That's all well and good, but maybe some of the time we're not so eager to go quietly into that good night. That's why we might linger over our movie decisions just a little, soak a little banter and badinage. Maybe Danny has the tennis on, or Rider is websurfing the free wi-fi (oops...) and there are cold Lilikoi sodas to be had. Certainly by now one or more odd characters has sauntered in. It is a mathematical certainty that somebody knows somebody else, and catching up occurs. There is a three minute philosophical chautauqua, and then we make our way home.

It is very delightfully retro in there. We must have the widest selection of VHS tapes in the county at our fingertips! (And yours for a reasonable price!) And when you pay for your movies (and your Lillikoi soda), you get rung up on a computer still in the DOS world. It makes the VHS tapes seem up-to-date. You young kids can have your newfangled Netflix. We rock our movies old school.

If you can't decide on a movie, you're in luck there. Danny used to work in The Business, as a video editor. Just tell him you're stumped, and you will get a couple of recommendations for movies you probably would have never considered before.

It's important to have public spaces where we can run into our neighbors more or less randomly. Other than the monthly board meetings at Anderson Hall, we don't have those random opportunities to run into each other. There are the VFD pancake and spaghetti events, and the community potlucks (thank you, Scott Nickel), but those are special events. What we need is a place to run into each other on a daily basis, and if we have to steal one from Occidental, well that's just the way it is. See you there.

# Occidental Oriented

By Benjamynn Gabriel  
benjamynn@mac.com (707) 874-3669



While there's lots of exciting news this month, I'm sorry to open on a sad note, and with a plea for assistance. Occidentalite **Morgan Caulfield** died unexpectedly from cancer on February 22, just twelve hours after going to the emergency room with stomach pain. I've heard she was a unique artist and photographer, whose great compassion for animals means she left behind a beautiful red heeler named Jasper, and his cat Simon, who need a permanent home.

## Occidental Center for the Arts

The beloved Grande Dame of Occidental, **Doris Murphy**, will turn 100 years old on March 11. Doris, one of the Occidental Center for the Arts' original founders and driving force, first envisioned an arts center about 15 years ago when a member of the Occidental Choir mentioned the lack of an appropriate place to perform. She formed a committee and began to search for a venue. Land owned by the county proved to be fraught with difficulties; eventually, developer Orrin Thiessen stepped forward and donated the old Harmony School multi-purpose room/cafeteria, and the project really took flight.

The annual **Occidental Fool's Parade**, long the project of local musician Kate Price, is now being lead-sponsored by the OCA. The Parade will be Saturday, April 3, starting at 1 p.m. at the Community Center, ambling through downtown Occidental, and finishing back at the Center. Make sure to bring your 'inner fool', your clown face, and your motley attire!

After the parade, the OCA will host an **"Acoustical Mystery Tour"** open house to celebrate progress on Phase II of the renovation efforts. Local musicians, singers, and writers can try out the acoustics of the refurbished Center. If you are interested in participating, contact fanning@sonic.net, who will fit in as many different kinds of presentations as possible. Currently, there are kids' tables, stand up acts, clowns, and readings, to name but a few.

Renovation has been spearheaded by Patrick Fanning and Steve Fowler, the current President, who attended an informational meeting held at the Harmony site in November 2004. "Next thing I knew my name was on the permits and I was President of the Board!" quips Steve.

"Our corps of volunteers is bedrock solid," he continues. He and Patrick have inspired sculptors to swing hammers, painters to hang dry wall, poets to write press releases, and a committed group to take on the duties of serving on a board of directors and run hard working committees. Since last May, the Center has been taken apart and put back together by this very dedicated group.

The entire Occidental community is integral to the effort, with local volunteers supplying what Steve terms 'human capital,' while the restaurants in town have been providing food, and others are transporting the food and cheerleading! Still others hold fundraisers to pay for supplies and permits.

"We really are creating a first class center that will produce 100 events a year in a small Sonoma County village. And we are doing it on time and under budget." Steve has a deeply-rooted connection to this project: three of his children attended school on site, and he belonged to the Occidental Choir for 25 years.

**Phase III** (completion), includes a new 493 square foot flexible stage with wheelchair lift, 700 square feet of new backstage area, new raked seating for better sight lines, solar panels on the roof, and remodeling the art gallery. On the west side of the auditorium there will be a new kitchen, restrooms, storage, and amphitheater stage.

## Occidental Community Center

The Occidental Community Center will host Friday Community Markets in the auditorium and activity room, March 19 through May 28, from 4-7 p.m.; outdoor space will be available for enclosed concessionaires. Local farms, food vendors, and artisans can purchase space for \$15/week. The Market will only be open to retailers of locally produced goods. Call 707.874.1938 or [occidental.occ@gmail.com](mailto:occidental.occ@gmail.com).

**Reminder:** The OCC is a local community resource at the corner of Bohemian Highway and Graton Road. It has a licensed commercial kitchen and disabled accessible bathrooms. It is available for community events.

Please keep sending me input on local happenings so I have news. We're a monthly paper - next deadline: March 19 *Thanks!*