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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 three years ago.

Featured In...

Montecito designer **Sonia De Mello** is riding the crest of a wave!

Brazilian-born Sonia, whose showroom is above Tre Lune on Coast Village Road, has just had one of her sexy creations featured in the annual *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue.

"It is a great honor to be in it and it's obviously great for business, given it opens so many doors," gushes Sonia, who launched her line, under the name So De Mel, four years ago.

"I've had some of my collection used on the magazine's website in the past, but have never had a swimsuit in the actual issue itself."

This year's issue – which features international soccer player and Giorgio Armani underwear model **Cristiano Ronaldo's** Russian-born girlfriend, **Irina Shayk**, on the cover – is said to be one of the best sellers in



Sonia De Mello has design featured in *Sports Illustrated's* latest swimsuit issue

the Time Warner magazine's 47-year history.

Sonia's bright red-orange bikini, "A Tropical Affair," is worn by 20-year-old model **Jasmine Tookes**, who lives down the coast in Huntington Beach.

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"She was the perfect person to model it," says the designer, who initially came to our Eden by the Beach to study English at City College. "She has a very unique look."

Sonia always dreamed of being a fashion designer and learned a great deal from her sister **Iris**, who was a seamstress at the family home near Rio de Janeiro.

"She could create a beautiful outfit and I took it all in as a child."

But her first job was as a junior bank executive before working as a nanny to subsidize her studies in Santa Barbara.

"People were always asking me where I got my bathing suits and I ended up as an agent for a Latin American company, working for them for four years before branching out on my own to make suits more to my personal taste, opening a small design showroom behind what is now Maison K," explains Sonia, who started selling her selection of 12 designs made of Spandex and nylon to local stores.

"They are a mix of Europe and Brazilian. They are very glamorous with an interesting blend of colors like dark green, navy blue and chocolate brown."

The four stores that stocked her collection have now expanded to 20 in the U.S. and Europe, with the swimsuits selling for between \$150 and \$220.

And last year her collection had 30 styles working with ten colors, being featured in such fashion glossies as *Shape*, *Lucky*, *InStyle* and *Elle*.

But *Sports Illustrated* is undoubtedly the icing on the cake, admits Sonia, whose website is www.sodemel.com

"I show my collection in Miami each year in July and the magazine editors chose twenty pieces to try out and called in January saying they were

going to feature one of my designs. I was really excited and honored, particularly as they photograph between thirty thousand and forty thousand each year before making the final choices."

A major splash, without a doubt...

"Surf Creatures"



Shaun Tomson shows off his new children's project in Washington, D.C.

Former world champion surfer and environmentalist **Shaun Tomson** has been promoting his first children's book "Surf Creatures," about creatures that live under his surfboard.

The rhyming storybook, which can be accessed as an eBook, and as iPhone and iPad app, was front row and center at the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington, D.C. when Shaun, a longtime resident of our rarefied enclave, jetted in to delight local youngsters with his story.

It also helped that a number of the sea creatures mentioned in his colorful tale, which he took great pleasure in demonstrating to me the other day, are on display at the zoo.

Shaun, a board member of the Surfrider Foundation and the zoo's recently launched Project Blue Planet initiative, also highlighted a number of easy steps children can take to do their part in preserving the world's oceans.

To check out the website go to www.surf-creatures.com.

Global Attention

It has been a tale of two *Journals* for Montecito author **Robert Eringer**.

Robert, 56, has been getting global coverage of his year-long David versus Goliath battle with **Prince Albert** of Monaco, 52, over back salary and severance as spymaster for the son of the late Prince Rainier and Princess Grace, including such august publication as the *Times* and *Independent* in

London, the *Times* in Los Angeles and New York, and *Paris Match* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* in France.

In my last column in this illustrious organ I reported on the latest chapter, with Albert's high-priced legal eagles filing a lawsuit in Paris demanding Robert delete a number of posts on his blog, claiming they are false.

At the same time I note, *The Wall*

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MISCELLANY (Continued from page 7)

Street Journal, which is now headed up by an old colleague, **Les Hinton**, ran a lengthy piece by **John Emshwiller** and **Max Colchester** on the long saga and the postings, which accuse Albert of corrupt practices, cozying up to criminals and failing to deal with the 482-acre principality's possible role of the murder of Jews by the Nazis during World War II.

Robert, meanwhile, thunders: "Everything I publish in my blog is true and verifiable to the best of my knowledge."

He calls the litigation part of "a campaign to silence Monaco's critics."

Stay tuned...

SBCC Book



Writer Leslie Westbrook chronicles City College's first century (photo credit Miguel Fairbanks)

How fitting that Summerland writer **Leslie Westbrook**, who was a student at Santa Barbara City College, should be commissioned by principal **Andrea Serban** to write a lavish coffee table tome to celebrate its first 100 years.

The 128-page book "A Century of Success: A Future of Possibilities," is a lively and informative overview of the sprawling campus overlooking the Pacific, but it was not an easy project.

"I wrote the first draft of the book in the summer and fall of 2009," Leslie told me at a celebratory bash at Tecolote, the tony tome temple in the Upper Village.

"I only had four months to come up with it. I did it in record time.

"But there were also edits, proof-reading, additions and changes to be made, as well as the selection, collection and identification of more than 180 images for the book to contend with, working with the designer **Don French**."

Leslie did a considerable amount of research and says, considering the size of the project, there were very few problems.

Now she is busily working on her next book, a memoir of 85-year-old Oscar and Grammy winning composer-arranger **Johnny Mandel**...

"Biederman's Match"

Special accolades have to go to designers **Nayna Ramey** – scenery –, **John Markiewicz** – sound – and **Michael Klaers** – lighting – for UCSB Theater's latest production,

the cautionary comedy "Biederman's Match" by Brooklyn playwright **Beau Willimon** at the Performing Arts Theatre, which ends in most explosive fashion.

Julian Rubel as the procrastinating principal character with **Courtney Savage** as the fastidious submissive wife are perfectly cast, as are the menacing houseguests **Jordan Holmes** and **Andrew Fromer** in director **Risa Brainin's** show.

Particular mention goes to **Hasmik Saakian** playing the long-suffering housemaid.

Add to the mix, sultry voiced **Brittany Carriger** with her backup duo, **Emily McKeown** and **Chase O'Donnell**, and a five-piece band, and you have a literally incendiary show.

The only thing missing is a fire extinguisher...

Braving the Weather

Drenching rain and even a tornado warning failed to deter the audience at the Granada for the Santa Barbara Symphony under Italian guest conductor **Corrado Rovaris**, music director of the Opera Company of Philadelphia.

The eclectic program kicked off with "Concerto for String Orchestra" by **Nino Rota**, probably better known as the Oscar winning composer for "The Godfather II" score and the love theme from Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 Shakespearean gem "Romeo and Juliet."

Shostakovich's "Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor" with **Jon Lewis**, one of L.A.'s top studio musicians, on trumpet and Russian **Natasha Kislenko**, a faculty member of the Music Academy of the West since 2004, on piano, ended the first half.

The entertaining performance wrapped with Mendelssohn's expansive "Symphony No. 5 in D minor."

Well worth weathering the downpours for...

Royal Ramblings

If you're already sick of hearing about the forthcoming nuptials of Prince William and Kate Middleton, you can now buy screen-printed souvenir sick bags!

The "Throne Up" bags, designed by London-based **Lydia Leith** and selling for \$5, have become a hot item and the first, limited edition, has already sold out.

Each bag has an illustration of the tony twosome in the outfits they wore when they announced their engagement.

Under the picture, a warning reads: "Keep this handy on April 29th, 2011."

In other palace news, the last segment in my five-part series on the Royal Wedding airs on KCOY-TV's 5 pm newscast on Tuesday.

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Royal wedding "barf bags" are becoming a collector's item

Having promoted the series on the Super Bowl, many of you noted ads appearing during the Grammy Awards in L.A. the other day.

I was wedged between **Mick Jagger** and **Lady Gaga**.

A most interesting convergence!...

Master of Art

Renowned pianist **Peter Serkin** returned to the Lobero Theatre stage to play Beethoven's "Diabelli Variations," a monumental and challenging work of 33 pieces that he first played in the same venue a quarter of a century ago.

Recognized as an artist of passion and integrity, Serkin's grandfather was violinist and composer Adolf Busch and his father, pianist Rudolf Serkin.

His compelling keyboard playing of the hour-long opus captivated the audience for the latest offering in the CAMA Masterseries.

Combined with Schoenberg's "Three Piano Pieces" and another Beethoven work, "Sonata in A-flat Major," the performance was as entertaining as it was profound.

Serkin, 63, is a master of his art...

Happy Birthday

Melissa Somrack, production manager for Opera Santa Barbara, got more than she bargained for when she attended a rehearsal for the company's fully staged "La Traviata," which opens at the Granada on March 4.

The cast - **Rebecca Davis**, **Ryan MacPherson** and **Malcolm MacKenzie** -, together with conductor **Valery Ryvkin** and artistic director **Jose Maria Conde**, burst into a wonderful chorus of "Happy Birthday" for Melissa, who also does double duty at the SB Symphony and the Music Academy of the West.

"It couldn't have been a nicer surprise," laughed Melissa.

The new version of Verdi's popular opera is set in Paris at the end of the 19th century and has magnificent new sets costing more than \$100,000, ornate specially made costumes costing an equal amount, as well as a full orchestra.

"After 150 hours of rehearsal, not counting the time the performers have done their own homework, we're raring to go," says Conde, who is sharing production costs with Opera San Jose...

Choral Society Rehearses

Just 24 hours earlier I had been at the Music Academy of the West where The Santa Barbara Choral Society, under

music director **JoAnne Wasserman**, was busy rehearsing another monumental work, Bach's "B Minor Mass."

The show - featuring soloists **Deborah Mayhan**, **Tamara Bevard**, **Cynthia Jansen**, **Jonathan Mack** and **Dean Elzinga** - is one of the most difficult pieces the choir has performed, says immediate past president **Mary Dan Eades**.

"It was Bach's last major work and he worked on it for thirty years on and off. He put everything into it and there are innumerable jumps and interludes. It needs a great deal of rehearsal time to get it right."

Given the religious aspect of the performance, which lasts nearly two and a half hours, it was decided to stage the concert, which opens on Saturday, at the 600-seat San Roque Catholic Church...

Family Ballet Series

State Street Ballet's first performance in its new Family Concert series at the Lobero couldn't have been more appropriate for youngsters.

Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book," with young star, Mowgli - well danced by **Yosuke Yamamoto** -, colorful sets by **Jean-Francois Revon**, and innovative animal costumes by **Christina Giannina** and **Anaya Cullen**, made for a thoroughly enjoyable performance.

"We're delighted it went so well and I think we'll now make it an annual tradition," says artistic director **Rodney Gustafson**.

Afterwards children and parents were invited into the Lobero courtyard to have their photos taken with the wonderfully costumed cast.

What fun!...

Valentine Serenade

Trinity Episcopal Church was the perfect venue for UCSB's "Hearts for the Arts - A Valentine Serenade."

The concert, featuring students and faculty, was an eclectic mix of music from Mozart, Schumann, Bizet, Brahms, Shostakovich and Reinecke.

Particularly amusing was the finale from Rossini's "L'Italiana in Algeri" with **John Ballerino** on piano.

An evening of high note...

Sightings: Talk show host **Ellen DeGeneres** and companion, **Portia de Rossi**, getting their Java jolts at Pierre Lafond... Comedian **Billy Crystal** checking out the antique stores in Summerland... Actor **Paul Walker** noshing at the bustling Olio Pizzeria...

Pip! Pip! for now

Readers with tips, sightings and 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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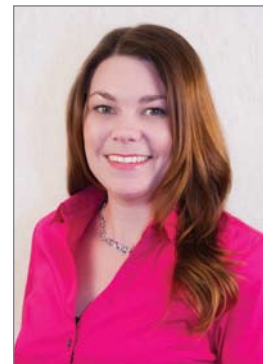
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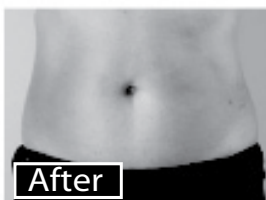
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