

THE OJAI RETURNS

For its 112th edition

By Rebecca Unruh

**WILLIAM THACHER
FOUNDED THE ANNUAL
OJAI VALLEY TENNIS
TOURNAMENT AS AN
EXCUSE TO PRACTICE
HIS THREE FAVORITE TS:
TENNIS, TEA AND TALK.**

Over a century later, Thacher's modest dream has long since expanded into one of the West Coast's largest tennis tournaments. This year, from April 25 to April 29, marks the Ojai's 112th edition. Over 1,500 male and female singles and doubles players will compete in 27 divisions, from junior high to high school to community colleges to Division 2 and 3 colleges to the Pac 12 to the adult Open



division. The tournament is to be played over five days on various public and private courts in Ojai, Ventura, Oxnard and Port Hueneme, and is organized and run by a staff of 500 volunteers. Continuing in Thacher's tradition, free orange juice is served in the morning, and tea and cookies in the afternoon, providing a great opportunity for tennis, tea and talk.

This year a few changes have been made to the schedule: the Pac 12 men's tournament will be played as a team competition rather than individual competitions, and there will

be evening matches played at 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. In Ojai there are six or seven multicourt venues, including the Ojai Valley Athletic Club, the Ojai Valley Inn and Libbey Park. Besides hosting this venerable tournament, the Ojai Valley Tennis Club works with the Ojai Recreation Department to introduce children throughout the Ojai Valley to the sport of tennis. Vivian Perrett, the club president, says that Ojai is a "wonderful community with a big heart, and we could not put on this tournament without them."

WORDFEST REDUX

Ojai Wordfest is back

By Rebecca Unruh

**LET THE WORD GO
FORTH: OJAI WORDFEST
IS BACK FOR A SECOND
YEAR.** Spanning two weekends and

eight days, from March 24 to March 31, the annual literary festival will again celebrate talented local writers and the literary history of the Ojai Valley.

This year the festival honors three local legends: Caroline Thompson, screenwriter for such Hollywood hits as *Edward Scissorhands*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *The Corpse Bride*; Gay Hendricks, author of *The First Rule of Ten* and founder of the Spiritual Cinema Circle, which distributes inspirational movies around the world; and Larry Chambers, author of more than 50 published books, including many in the "true combat story" genre. Whether you enjoy writing yourself, have a passion for literature or are simply interested in opening your mind to the power of words, Wordfest provides fun, hands-on activities such as a downtown

"lit crawl" along Ojai's historic Arcade; the world premiere of Floetry, a combination of poetry and technology; an afternoon tea with local literary legends; "Well Red," a gathering of area authors showcasing their new works; and poetry jams, writing workshops and open-mic venues. Peter Bellwood will also present a master class on "Passion," during Wordfest. Bellwood, a collage artist and musician, is also the screenwriter of

Highlander and the coming film, *Monster Butler*.

Ojai "has a wealth of literary talent — from *New York Times* bestselling authors to internationally distinguished writing teachers to world-renowned novelists, playwrights, screenwriters, songwriters, poets, literary scholars, spoken-word artists and more," says Wordfest Co-Director Sequoia Hamilton. ■

Gay Hendricks, Caroline Thompson and Larry Chambers

