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New owners to carry on the Wonderland tradition

By DANIA AKKAD
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A new Queen of Hearts will be crowned at 598 Laine St. today and, hopefully, no one will lose her head.

Joan and John Kiliany, owners of The Jabberwock, the Monterey bed and breakfast named after the nonsensical poem in Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking-Glass, And What Alice Found There, say it has been sold to new owners.

After high tea today, Dawn Perez and her husband, John Hickey, will take over the whimsical inn, full of porcelain mushrooms, dodo birds and enough white rabbits to excite any Alice fanatic.

"I've enjoyed my reign as the Queen of Hearts," said Kiliany, standing in the inn she's run with her husband since 1996. A loud grandfather clock ticks at the center of the home that smells of Pledge and freshly baked cookies.

Long before the honeymooners, the Carroll-obsessed literature professors and the guests named Alice started gathering for 5 p.m. sherry hour, the house on Laine Street was a cozy Monterey refuge.

The two-story, Arts and Crafts-style house was built in 1911 for Eva and Wilber George. At the time, there was a horse carriage downhill from the house, said Kiliany. That's now been converted into condominiums.

In 1937, after Wilber George died, Eva George gave the home to the Victory Mission Sisters, a group of nuns who traveled to Third World countries, returning to the house for rest, Kiliany said.

A small contingent of nuns who remained at the house taught catechism classes to local children, many of whom come back to

visit once in a while, she said.

In 1981, Barbara and Jim Allen, a couple from Los Angeles, bought the house and opened a portal to Wonderland.

Jim Allen fell for Carroll's poem when he volunteered for different schools in Los Angeles, Kiliany said. When the children became unruly, Allen read "The Jabberwock" and the children calmed down and wanted more.



Video

[The Jabberwock](#)



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The poem, which seems to be about a man who hunts and kills the scary Jabberwock, is full of nonsense words that now double as the names of rooms at the inn, including Wabe, Borogrove and Mome Rath.

The Kilians bought the bed and breakfast in 1996, ready to leave behind jobs in San Mateo. At the time, they weren't necessarily Carroll fans, but Joan Kiliány said they liked the idea of the Jabberwock and the alternative world presented in Carroll's tale.

"The story is really kind of a parallel world. It's kind of a dream world," Kiliány said. Although, she added, it could have been "what they might have been smoking."

For the past month, Kiliány said she's put Dawn Perez and her husband — who left real estate and oil refinery jobs, respectively, in Vacaville to move into the innkeepers cottage on the property and take over shop — through "bed and breakfast boot camp."

"It was an apprenticeship, really," said Perez, who doesn't plan to change the theme of the inn. "How you talk to guests, places to go, places to see."

And, of course, at The Jabberwock, that also meant learning a whole new vocabulary.

When escrow was finalized last week, Perez nailed it.

"We 'callooh'-ed and 'callay'-ed all afternoon," she said.

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