

Los Feliz Observer

Organized in 1916 for the betterment and protection of the Los Feliz District

SPRING 2007

Flames Come Too Close For Comfort



Top and bottom left and center photo: Marian Dodge

photo: Richard Stanley

For more photos and related story, see page 19

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The Los Feliz Improvement Association was formed in 1916 to further the interests of the Los Feliz district of Los Angeles, its residents and property owners, and to undertake any activity that in the opinion of the Board of Directors will be beneficial to the district, its residents or property owners.

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Booze Served at the Observatory?

LFIA "Strongly Opposes" Puck Liquor License

By Marian Dodge

Liquor licenses are prohibited in open spaces and in residential areas. Griffith Observatory is located in Griffith Park which is zoned open space (OS-1XL). It is accessed exclusively through Los Feliz residential neighborhoods. Nevertheless, Wolfgang Puck Catering and Events, LLC, which was granted the exclu-

sive food and beverage concession at Griffith Observatory on September 6, 2006, is now applying for a zoning variance to allow liquor to be served at the Observatory. Puck is actively planning an ambitious schedule of catered special events serving alcohol at the city's newly renovated icon overlooking our community.

"Mars or Martinis?" was the headline aptly used with a story on The Oaks Homeowners Association web site. The issue has become heated and contentious as it is being debated at public forums.

Here's the history of this long-running drama.

Request for Proposal Process, October, 2004

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Griffith Observatory cafe, catering, and gift shop/bookstore on October 13, 2004. The document was quite specific in what it wanted and what it did not want. The RFP specified that "rentals to outside groups...will be the exception, not the general rule. The City does not want the operator/caterer to be marketing, selling or promoting the Observatory as a catering venue...financial expectations from this business opportunity (contract) should not be based on the potential for external (outside groups and organizations) food and beverage catering" (p. 6). Families will make up the largest portion of visitors (p.8). "At this time Beer & Wine service is not planned for the cafe" (p.10).

Only two firms submitted proposals in response to the RFP, Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts and Wolfgang Puck. The two proposals were reviewed and evaluated. Delaware North followed the guidelines of the RFP. Puck went well beyond the requirements of the RFP and earned more points by promising more revenue generating concepts than the RFP allowed. The evaluators apparently ignored the restrictions of the RFP and awarded more points to Puck.

The entire process of the RFP and subsequent concession agreement was without any public notification or input. The community was denied due process and was left in the dark about what was to happen in their own back yard.

Gerry Hans, President of the Oaks Homeowners Association, heard that Wolfgang Puck received the RFP for the Observatory concession from Recreation and Parks. He contacted Puck on April 3, 2005 for further information. He was given no information and after a lengthy run around was referred to the concession department at RAP.

Park Commission's policies, August 9, 2006

A year and a half later Puck's attorney finally contacted the neighbors. We went scrambling for information regarding the concession and found the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners Schedule of Rates and Fees, dated August 9, 2006, which established policies covering the cafe concession at the Observatory.

The August 9 report states that "All facilities...are primarily for the use of the Observatory in accomplishing its educational mission" (p.2) The purpose of other allowed events would be "civic responsibility and the promotion of science and astronomy" (Attach. A p. 3) The use of the facility by the Observatory takes priority over all other uses (Attach A p. 2). Rentals would generally only be when the Observatory is closed to the public (Mondays) and only during the event season October 1 to April 1 (p. 3) so as not to conflict with the Greek Theatre season. There was a requirement that alcohol service at catered events conclude by 9:00 pm. (p. 2).

Wolfgang Puck's Attorney, September, 2006

R. J. Comer, an attorney for Armbruster & Goldsmith,

continued on page 14

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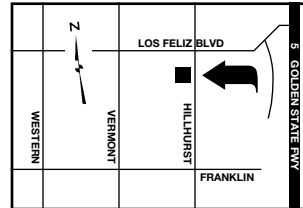


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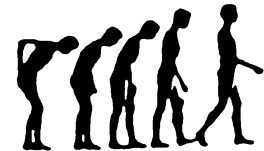
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Los Feliz Sparkles with Architectural Gems



Architects, clockwise, from top left:
 Lloyd Wright, Sowden House, 1927
 Paul R. Williams, 1930
 R.M. Schindler, Skolnik House, 1951
 Lloyd Wright, Taggart House, 1922
 Paul R. Williams, 1946
 Paul R. Williams, 1926

Los Feliz is known for its architecture. If you say you live in Los Feliz, people often reply, "Oh, I love the Spanish homes there."

But, while the Spanish Colonial Revival style might dominate the neighborhood, there are many other architectural treasures, many by well-known architects like R.M. Schindler, Richard Neutra, Wallace Neff, John Lautner, Gregory Ain, Raphael Soriano, Edward Fickett and of course Frank Lloyd Wright and his son Lloyd Wright.

Where else besides Los Feliz and neighboring Silver Lake can you have such a concentration of varied architects literally in your backyard? That's why this issue of the *Los Feliz Observer* is focusing on the architecture, particularly the residential homes dotted through the Los Feliz district.

As city preservation director Ken Bernstein says, "Los Feliz offers Los Angeles a virtually unparalleled legacy of architectural excellence and experimentation from Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis house to Lloyd Wright's Sowden House, and from Richard Neutra's Lovell House to the iconic Griffith Observatory."

Bernstein also said Los Feliz also benefits from pedestrian-scaled architecture along Vermont and Hillhurst avenues that is relatively rare in Los Angeles.

He points out that some challenges facing Los Feliz are more emblematic of those facing other LA communities: how best to preserve its rich architectural heritage at a time when real estate and mansionization pressures are so intense and how to ensure consistently high-quality commercial development and a vibrant public realm that is worthy of the community's remarkable private spaces.

Marian Dodge, LFIA president, agrees with the challenges Los Feliz faces going forward. "That's why it is so important for LFIA to serve as a watchdog over our community and to work with residents to make sure we preserve our architectural gems and at the same time make sure the proposed commercial developments are appropriate for the community."

We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Los Feliz Observer* and the various articles featuring the architecture in Los Feliz.

Great Magical Spaces of Los Feliz

By Richard Stanley

When I look back over two decades of open houses, listing appointments and seller representation, a handful or two of unforgettable spaces come to mind. They hit just the right note in combining site, materials and style into an unforgettable indoor or outdoor room. These homes and gardens are magical.

Here are a few personal favorite places in Los Feliz where I'd like to linger:

C.B. DeMille's Living Room

Arguably the most sumptuous villa in Los Feliz, the C.B. DeMille estate has it all: a commanding site once used by the local Gabrielino Indians for pow-wows; rolling lawns; mature trees and a wrap-around view including the Observatory, the hills and city lights below. What it also has is provenance. DeMille bought the home about 1916, shortly after it was built in the then-favored 'Mid-Western Mediterranean' grand style. He lived here until his death in 1959. The current owners performed a meticulous restoration over the last 10 years. Though the paneled formal dining room is the epitome of elegance, the embassy-scaled, step-down living room outranks any such room in town. DeMille was proud of his house. Surely, the Who's Who of Hollywood's Golden Era tread on these polished floors. If this room's ivory-toned columns and paneled walls had tongues to speak, I'd be all ears.

Tim Curry's Patio

In the 1990s, actor Tim Curry rescued a 1923 Mediterranean hacienda by architect Stiles Clements that was slated to be demolished. The house is built in a "U" shape with the legs open to the amphitheater-like slope up to Griffith Park. The original owners, a world-traveling couple, designed a garden in the manner of those at the Alhambra in Spain. A faux spring fills the swimming pool with sandy beach at the top of the garden. The water then cascades down the better part of the three-quarter acre xeriscape garden to splash into a lily pond at the foot of the patio. On one



Tim Curry's outdoor patio area

side of the patio, a robust outdoor fireplace, complete with original, hand-wrought tools and Spanish tiles depicting the tale of Don Quixote, stands ready to chase any evening chill. The wings of the house, with its second floor balcony, embrace this marvelous outdoor room. Sadly, a recent owner removed the stamped concrete patio and replaced it with sod! I hope the patio's floor will be restored, so that man's footsteps will once again harmonize with the sounds of splashing water and nature.

The Sowden House Courtyard

Lloyd Wright's 1926 Sowden House on Franklin Avenue is a house turned inside-out. The living spaces wrap completely around a central courtyard in true hacienda fashion. Built for a couple who liked a good party, the house is exceedingly private (all the better in which to entertain in Prohibition Era Los Feliz). One grand window offers only a high, southern view of the city from one end of the house. Glass doors may open nearly every room to the central courtyard, which originally had lighted sculptural columns that echoed Wright's Mayan-esque "textile block" motif. At the other end of the courtyard is a proscenium-like space, now used as a master suite. The current owner added a controversial swimming pool to the courtyard, but this element now unites the main elements of earth, fire, air and water to create unabashedly theatrical magic in the house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright's son.

W.C. Fields' Solarium

The comedian W.C. Fields never owned a house, not even his favorite house, across from C.B. DeMille's estate. He lived there for about seven years, until his death on Christmas Day 1946. Originally built in the late teens by an oilman and his wife who outbid William Randolph Hearst for architectural elements from a Spanish monastery for their dream house, the villa is imposing. In 1928, the original owners added a glass and bronze-framed, barrel-vaulted solarium from which to overlook the city. The tension between indoors and outdoors energizes this room. I know of no other like it in Los Feliz.

Here is the perfect space in which to enjoy a book or pre-dinner cocktail, though later-owner, Lily Tomlin, hung a Christmas tree upside-down here for years!

My House

I mention my own house, not to brag, but to illustrate that great spaces need not be huge spaces (my home is, by far, the smallest in my neighborhood) and that an owner should embrace and enhance what magic a house already possesses. Before I bought my house I sat, alone, for over two hours, absorbing it. I saw past the mutilations and the ubiquitous deferred maintenance. What emerged after restoration was a simple space: open-raftered, with a galley kitchen alcove at one end and a massive rock fireplace at the other. The house is understated from the street, but the opposite side is all glass that slides open to a full-width deck at tree-top level. Beyond lies a panorama from downtown to the ocean. This view is a constant entertainment. Italian architect Andrea Palladio admonished that at least one room dimension should be over-scale. My compact "great room" excels in two dimensions, reaching upward and to the horizon. If there's another room in Los Feliz with this much punch in such a small space, I haven't seen it. This room is one small reason why I live in Los Feliz!

“Architect to the Stars” Built Homes in Los Feliz

By Diane Kanner

Los Feliz had a “golden age” of residential architecture at the same time the film industry experienced a period idealized today, the 1920s to the 1940s. Wallace Neff designed six homes within the greater Los Feliz area during that time period, and they represent all the styles the architect is remembered for except his inventive “Airform Bubble” house.

The 1924 A.L. Shoenborne house at 4447 Cromwell Avenue was his first locally, executed in the Mediterranean meld of styles for which the architect was best known. The second home, then at 2441 N. Vermont Avenue, and today with an address on Cockerham Avenue, provided Los Feliz with a turning point in real estate desirability. E.L. Petifils was the original owner in 1926, with a pharmacy, catering and candy businesses lost to time. It was the owner of 10 years or so ago, Madonna, who turned the public eye to the area, and property values began to skyrocket. She paid nearly 4 million dollars for the house and was one of the first of her generation of entertainment industry names to discover the 70-year-old neighborhood. Would she enroll her daughter in a local school? Madonna did not remain in residence long enough to satisfy the curious.

Neff number three, at 2520 Nottingham Avenue, was Norman and Dorothy Chandler’s first home and they also stayed only a few years before moving away. Their 1927 residence is the easiest of the six by the architect to gain a good vantage point.

Number four would be easy to see if a previous owner had not grown a hedge at the corner of Finley and Kenmore which keeps its yard private. Built in 1935 for Charles Hilliard, 4916 Finley Avenue is best known as the former home of chef Pierre Perlach of the long-shuttered Los Feliz Inn.

Numbers 4 and 5 were each stylistically indebted to the American Colonial period, with their stucco more Californian than New England. Number 5 is at 1950 Gramercy Place and was built in 1936 for Laurence Beilenson, attorney for the Screen Actors Guild when Ronald Reagan was its leader. The final home Neff designed in Los Feliz was erected in 1949 for Dr. and Mrs. John Tragerman. The current owner of 2300 W. Live Oak Drive created a stir in the adjacent Oaks neighborhood when he built an addition which is unrelated in style to the Tragerman home.

Neff worked near the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Tamarind Street for 36 years, above what is today a block of restaurants, coffehouses, and bookstores. His friend Conrad Hilton often picked him up and drove to the Los Feliz Brown Derby for lunch. Neff bought groceries from Victor’s and had his clothes cleaned on the ground floor of the building where he worked. He lived in the Villa Carlotta in a studio apartment, a far cry from what anyone would expect of the “architect to the stars.” Much of his life was in that same paradoxical mode.

Diane Kanner is author of “Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State.”



Wallace Neff home, 1935

Commonwealth Nursery in Park Has Plans to Grow

By Marian Dodge

From the 1920s to the 1970s the nursery in Griffith Park at the upper end of Commonwealth Avenue was a fully operational nursery where 25 gardeners propagated trees and plants in six greenhouses on 17 acres.

Then came Proposition 13 and funding cuts. The nursery deteriorated. For many years the old nursery has been a service yard, a place to dump trash, collect abandoned shopping carts, store piles of dirt and compost, and park service vehicles. Only hikers looking down on the facility could see the rows of old greenhouses with broken glass forlornly lining the slope.

The Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) is now working on plans to restore some of the nursery’s former glory. They are in the planning stage to create a Horticultural Learning Center with a new greenhouse, a shade cloth area, and an instructional area for greenhouse operations. The training program will accommodate 25 student gardeners per session in 20-week training programs focusing on plant nutrition, water conservation, composting, and the greening of Los Angeles.

In addition to supplying plants for city parks, it will serve as an educational facility for school groups. The plan includes locating specimen trees at the entrance to make it a more attractive facility. No estimate was given as to possible increase of traffic on Commonwealth Avenue. The estimated cost for Phase One is \$1.5 million. RAP has identified potential funding sources such as Proposition 84, but so far the project is not funded.

Stay Informed!

For the latest in
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www.LFIA.org

Living in a Landmark

Marian Dodge

It was love at first sight. I walked in the front door and fell in love with the house without seeing anything but the living room. My husband Steve and I used to spend our Sunday afternoons driving around with our Gebhard and Winter's "Architectural Guide to Los Angeles" and look at some wonderful architecture. We particularly liked modern architecture and decided that's what we wanted to buy. One day there was a tiny 2 line ad in the Times that said the magic word "Soriano" and we made the fateful call.

The week we moved in I had a terrible cold. I sat in the living room cuddling my hot tea and stared blankly out to the view of Griffith Park and allowed the quite calm of Raphael Soriano's International style house to wash over me.

We invited Soriano to our open house where he happily gave mini architecture lessons to guests who commented on a feature such as floor-to-ceiling glass walls, steel beams allowing broad open spaces, clean lines with no molding, the eight-foot doors, the stunning Carrara glass, the Japanese ash walls and ceiling. (*See Observer, Summer, 1998*)

Later reality set in; we really did have to repair the broken glass in the shower. It was only after we removed the broken glass that we discovered that it was Italian Carrara glass which had not been manufactured for thirty years. Oops! It is then that you realize that you are a steward of this architectural masterpiece. It's like owning a Monet except that you live in it.

We had a distinct advantage though; Raphael Soriano was delighted to come back for a visit. He had the original plans and snapshots he had taken during construction. He was pleased that the house, although it needed a lot of work, had not been ruined. He insisted that the original radiant heating in the floor could be repaired. Noted architectural photographer Julius Shulman, who also lives in a Soriano and photographed our home in 1956 for the Times, referred us to a specialist in radiant heating systems. The technician forced nitrogen through the pipes and put his ear to the floor Tonto style to listen for leaks. "I think the break is here," he announced and set up a jack hammer in the laundry room. A jack hammer inside! I gulped and took a deep breath. He quickly replaced the broken pipe and the radiant heating worked perfectly. We sent Soriano a picture of workmen triumphantly tossing the broken forced air heater off the roof.

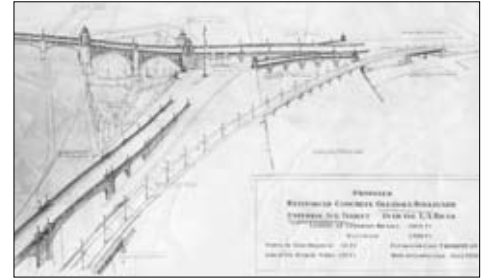
The key to our restoration was finding a craftsman who was sensitive to the design. Soriano's friend recommended David who had worked on a Lautner home as well as Schindler's Lovell Beach House. As he lived far away, he moved into the guest room Monday through Thursday so he could work on the roof, replace the plumbing, and meticulously cut mitered corners on the paneling. It required a lot of patience on everyone's part.

During the summer David's ten-year-old son was frequently with us. Even he pitched in. Plans revealed a fish pond where a flower bed was; he helped us dig it out and rejoiced with us as we put fish back into the restored pond.

Once I dropped a jar of mayonnaise in the kitchen. It bounced off the floor and I caught it! Soriano told me he saw the flooring material made by the Pirelli Tire Co. in the airport in Rome and liked it.

From time to time people will stop by to see the house. The first time I was surprised to hear voices chattering in the driveway and pointing at the ceiling of the car port. They were German architecture students examining the way Soriano designed the roof. Once it was a man from the Spanish consulate whose architect daughter came with a list of homes she wanted to visit. One time we commented to a Danish couple that most of our visitors were from Europe or Japan, not too many Americans. "Oh, don't you know," he replied, "You're in the book!" He ran down to his car and showed us a National Geographic

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Historic Hyperion Bridge Slated for \$30 Million Facelift in 2008

Renovation of the historic Glendale-Hyperion Bridge, built in 1929, is scheduled to begin in 2008 and will be done in phases over a three-year period.

The project calls for seismic strengthening and safety improvements. The estimated cost of the project is upwards to \$30 million.

The viaduct complex includes the Hyperion Bridge, which is the longest at 1,152 feet and extends over the LA River, Riverside Drive and the I-5 Freeway. It will undergo the most extensive construction.

Among the improvements are a single sidewalk along the west side of the complex and a pedestrian crosswalk across southbound Glendale Boulevard at the northern end of the bridge.

To restore the bridge to the way it looked when built in the 1920s, the balustrade will be replaced with replicas that more closely resemble the original railing system. At some point over the years, the original railing was altered.

Another component of the project is to realign the existing I-5 northbound off-ramp to Glendale Boulevard to connect the roadway with northbound Glendale Boulevard, south of the current exit. When completed, the exiting northbound I-5 traffic will be able to make a left turn and will no longer have to turn right into Atwater Village in order to go back across the bridge to reach the Los Feliz/Silver Lake area.

Traffic lanes, one or two at a time, will remain open during the construction. At times there may be congestion during construction activity, according to Department of Transportation officials attending a recent neighborhood meeting.



Ennis House Rebirth of a National Treasure

By Robert Leary

Work on the historic Frank Lloyd Wright Ennis House continues to move forward at a blazing pace. As part of the \$6.5 million stabilization and restoration project shifts into its final stage, the beauty and drama of the house's original design are coming into view.

The Ennis House Foundation Board headed by Architecture Committee chair Stephen McAvoy have commenced on the work of the rebuilding of the famous southern retaining wall. The 16" x 16" concrete replacement blocks were hand-produced and are being replaced where, for decades, the degrading and exposed elements of the facade of the house were apparent for all to see.

With respect to the original intentions of the famous architect, all aspects of this monumental undertaking have been given the utmost care, concern and respect. Eric Lloyd Wright, the grandson of Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mel Green, who has been instrumental in the rebuilding of Hollyhock House, along with McAvoy, oversee every detail of this process.

The interior restoration, conservation and preservation of the Ennis House have also been addressed. Ceilings have been repainted. Finishes have been brought back to their original circa 1924 color schemes and the spectacular woods used throughout out the house are being treated to restore the subtle yet radiant glow that Wright and Charles and Mable Ennis originally had in mind.

During heavy construction days great care was taken to make sure no neighbors would be inconvenienced in any way. During the days when trucks were loading and unloading material at the Ennis House site, flag men were placed on both the top and bottom of Glendower Avenue to make sure traffic would flow at an easy pace.

Money has been raised in conjunction with the \$6.5 million to supplement and fund the many interior and exterior projects that went beyond the scope of the original projection costs.

The estimated date of completion of this project is June 30, 2007, enabling McAvoy and the Ennis House Foundation Board to bring this project to completion ahead of time and under budget.

Robert Leary serves as the volunteer chairman of the Ennis House Foundation Board.

Research Your Homes Historic Roots by Visiting the Los Feliz Library

By Don Seligman

Anyone lucky enough to live in an historic neighborhood like ours must wonder at one time or another about their home's former residents. If you are lucky, as we were, someone who knew the house in the past will come knocking on your door one day. This happened to us twice.

The first time was at a yard sale when a woman who had lived in our home during the 1940s while attending UCLA asked to show the house to her daughter. The second time, the granddaughter of the owner/builder of our home wrote to us with a similar request and we gave her and four of her family members a tour one Saturday afternoon. She brought us photos, documents, and many anecdotes about the first residents in our home built in 1925.

But there is much to be learned about your home from many sources. If you want to delve into its history, the first place to begin is at the Los Feliz Public Library, where the LFIA has donated its survey of all Los Feliz single family dwellings. In four volumes organized by street names and addresses, you can find specific property information from all the Los Angeles County Department of Building and Safety records dating from the home's original construction.

The next place to look is in another notebook that will soon be available at the library. This is a transcription that I made two years ago of the data from the 1920 and 1930 United States census for each single family home built within the LFIA boundaries by those dates. This material is also organized by street and address and includes details about each resident in the house at the time of the census. In addition, the estimated value of each home in 1930 is given.

Another document that everyone possesses often has interesting items like old covenants or prior ownerships: The Title Insurance report that accompanies every home's purchase.

If you want to obtain or examine copies of the original architect's plans and building permits, you can apply at the Department of Building and Safety. Property records dating back to 1905 can be obtained from their office at 201 North Figueroa Street, First Floor, Room 110, Los Angeles, 90012. Copies can be requested either in person or by mail, or even by FAX at (213) 482-6862. A printable copy of the Mail/FAX form can be obtained at their website: www.ladbs.org/permits/bldg_permit_records.htm

A current Parcel Profile Report of your property can also be obtained over the internet at the same website under the section "Reports, Codes & Publications."

A final recommendation is to enter your home address in a search engine like Google. If you are lucky, your home might have had some special former residents, or have been featured in an earlier publication.

So enjoy the search and feel proud that you live in a neighborhood that offers rich historic as well as contemporary pleasures.

Spring Time Greetings

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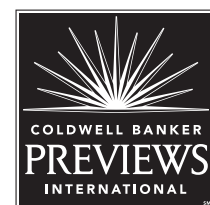
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In Memory of Charlotte De Armond

CHARLOTTE'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

My relationship with Charlotte was deeply personal. However, I am here today as the representative of the Board of the Los Feliz Improvement Association, its membership and all who have devoted time and energy to its work over the years.

The Association was formed over 90 years ago and throughout its history has benefited from the leadership of many, many fine people. But with all deference to past leaders, I believe that the respect which the Association enjoys today and its effectiveness in promoting its principles is due in material part to the work of Charlotte De Armond.

Charlotte joined the Board of the Association in 1993. She served as its President from 1997 – 2000. Having been “termed out,” the Board, in recognition of the importance of her continued visibility as the primary spokesperson for LFIA, created a new position, designating her “Chairman of the Board,” a position from which she so capably continued her leadership role.

With her keen intelligence, professionalism, judgment and unquestioned integrity, Charlotte elevated the level and quality of our discourse. Her personal credibility enhanced the credibility of the Association and all who speak for it.

How she did love tackling serious issues affecting our City! And she tackled those issues with great style and such subtle wit. Her writings are the epitome not only of impeccable research but in many cases (and those which she enjoyed most particularly) of a level of investigative reporting that would put Woodward and Bernstein to shame.

Charlotte, thank you from the bottom of our collective hearts for the benefits that your good works have provided to the neighborhood, the Park and the City. We promise that we will do our best to assure that the legacy you have given us is not squandered.

~ remarks delivered by LFIA boardmember, Donna Zenor



The LFIA Board of Directors is saddened by the death of the beloved Charlotte De Armond, a consummate civic leader. She died on Jan. 31, less than a month from her 88th birthday.

She served as president of LFIA from 1997 to 2000 when she took on the specially-created role as chairman of the board, which she held until last year. As an active board member, she attended the monthly meeting the week before she died.

Charlotte fought for what she thought was right and just on both Los Feliz and citywide issues that faced the community over the years.

During her distinguished career as a public relations executive she received many awards, including an Academy Award for a documentary she collaborated with filmmaker Taylor Hackford.

Charlotte was a graduate of the University of Nebraska, where she studied English, political science and journalism. She also pursued graduate studies at UCLA and was an avid Bruin fan.



top photo: Charlotte holding her daughter Anne with husband, Hank
center: Charlotte and Hank out on the town
bottom: Charlotte hard at work



What time is the right time?

If only real estate had a clock everyone could read. We'd know when the best time would be to buy; when to lock-in a loan—and when to sell. Real estate would be so easy.

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I like to think that if my clients enjoy working with me the first time, there might be another time. This notion has guided me over the last 20 years in real estate here in our neighborhood. If you want to know if now is the right time in real estate for you, I invite you to call me soon. Time is indeed "of the essence".



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In Happiest Neighborhood, Trees, Kool-Aid Fountain, Bridges, Homes and Even a Streamline Train are Historic Monuments



There is a wide variety of historic-cultural monuments in Los Feliz, ranging from trees, bridges, residences by famous architects to film studios.

In fact, Los Feliz has had 23 natural and manmade landmarks designated monuments since the city-wide preservation ordinance was passed in 1962. Plaques saluting the honor can be seen by each of the landmarks.

The first came in 1963 when avant-garde architect Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House was declared by the

city as Monument 12. The Gabrielino Indian site and the Feliz Adobe both were given historic-cultural status as was the Griffith Observatory, all are located in Griffith Park.

Others include the William Mulholland Memorial Fountain, nicknamed the "Kool-Aid" fountain because of its colorful night lights. Los Feliz' signature Deodar Cedar trees along Los Feliz Boulevard and the avocado trees on the 4400 block of Avocado Street were bestowed as city monuments.

The two famous Los Feliz bridges, the Franklin Avenue Shakespeare Bridge and the Glendale-Hyperion, have both been named historic-cultural monuments. Studios honored are Disney Studios, demolished on the site of Gelson's Market, and KCET Studios.

Residences that have obtained the designation include Arzner-Morgan House (2249 Mountain Oak) by architect W.C. Tanner; Edwards House (5642

Holly Oak Drive) by Gregory Ain; Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis House (2607 Glendower Ave.); Jacobson House (4520 Dundee Drive) by Edward Fickett; Lovell Health House (4616 Dundee Drive) by Richard Neutra; Samuel-Novarro House (5609 Valley Oak Drive) and Taggart House (2150-2158 Live Oak Drive, both by Lloyd Wright; and Monterey Apartments (4600-4604 Los Feliz Blvd.) by C.K. Smithley.

The Derby is Los Feliz' most recently-named monument, obtaining that recognition in 2005. Also the Midtown School, now Lycee International de Los Angeles, designed by John Lautner, has monument status.

Last but certainly not least, the Little Nugget in Traveltown received historic-cultural recognition. The streamline railroad passenger car, built in 1937, was designed by the Pullman Mfg. Co.



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Booze at the Observatory continued from page 3

LLP, representing Wolfgang Puck, met with the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) on September 19, with LFIA's Park Committee on September 25, with the Parks, River, and Open Spaces Committee (PROS) on October 9, and with the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council (HUNC) on November 20. Comer told us he did not have to notify neighbors because no one lived within 500 feet of the Observatory. The code requires notification of any property owner within 500 feet of the property involved, not the building. Since the property in question is Griffith Park, everyone adjacent to the park, including people in Burbank and Studio City, should have been notified of the variance request. That was not done.

The provisions in the application were alarming. A full line of alcoholic beverages would be served; events would take place anywhere on the Observatory grounds even during operating hours; areas being used by private parties could be cordoned off preventing the general public from viewing those areas of the Observatory; events would include "corporate meetings and conventions, social groups such as weddings, reunions and birthday parties, and charity and political fundraisers." (p. 2). Events could last until midnight or later (p.8). There would be no limit on the number of catered events per year; the only restriction was that they could not have back-to-back events (p. 8). That policy would allow 180 private, catered special events per year!

We asked Comer how this squared with the restrictions of the August 9 Park Commission report. He professed not to know anything about it nor its restrictions. Comer said that, in any case, they were not in agreement with Puck's concession

agreement; they would go back to the city and change the restrictions to suit their contract. The contract would not be nearly as profitable for Puck without the additional revenue from catered events.

The draft of Wolfgang Puck's request for an alcohol variance at the Observatory made numerous references to the fact that it was not designed to be a destination restaurant. As a matter of fact they stated it so many times that one could only come to the conclusion that they fully intended to create a destination restaurant at the Observatory. Those of you who have read *The Observer* for several years will recall that LFIA vigorously opposed and stopped a destination restaurant at the Observatory in the spring of 2004, shortly before the RFP for the Observatory cafe concession was issued.

Puck Concession Agreement, September, 2006

Bernadette Soter of the PROS Committee obtained a copy of the Wolfgang Puck Operating Concession Agreement. [No. 06-0332, 4/05/07] The document was approved as to form by the City Attorney's Office on September 6, 2006. Apparently the RFP guidelines were ignored.

The contract clearly states that "the concessionaire shall have the option to sell alcoholic beverages" (p.15) as opposed to the RFP which said there would be no alcohol at this time. Puck's contract surprisingly goes on to state that "City/Observatory Management shall cooperate fully with the concessionaire with regard to obtaining such license" (p.15)

That agreement states that they "will not make use of the premises in any manner which might interfere with the intended use of the facility (p. 4). "Hours of operation for catered special events is expected to conform to the park's hours of operation" (p.17) That con-

continued on page 16



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Los Feliz Took Leading Role in LFIA's Stellar Movie Night

By Rulon Openshaw



The first annual "Night at the Movies" in February attracted 200 LFIA members and their families to the Wells Fargo Theater at the Autry National Center for a celebration of famous – and not so famous – films, all of which were shot in Los Feliz.

The audience was treated to clips of 11 movies ranging from the iconic John Ford western "The Searchers" to the camp horror classic "House on Haunted Hill." As one guest observed, there was "nothing but enjoyment and yes, education too, for attendees."

The Master of Ceremonies for the evening was LFIA board member Rulon Openshaw. He was assisted in the presentation of the films by Councilman Tom LaBonge, Griffith Observatory Director Dr. Edwin Krupp, and LFIA board member and actress Christy Barrett.

Before the program, guests dined on "movie-type" refreshments, such as hot dogs served from an authentic hand cart, freshly-popped popcorn, sodas and coffee, and, for dessert, theater concession candy.

During the program, the Master of Ceremonies alerted the audience that there was an incident occurring in the park, but as those in attendance quickly grasped, the emergency was a contrivance to introduce the 1958 science fiction masterpiece "War of the Colossal Beast," featuring an attack by a giant man on a school bus full of students visiting the Griffith Observatory on a field trip.

There were several individuals in the audience who had a direct connection with one or more of the films shown.

Robert Patrick, the star of the current television hit "The Unit," was featured in a scene from "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle" shot at Griffith Observatory. Robert was warmly applauded by the audience at the end of his clip.

Eileen Weisinger, who stunt doubled for Drew Barrymore in the same film, was also present, as was LFIA member Betty Topper whose home was used in the scene shown from "L.A. Confidential."

The enthusiastic audience left the Autry already talking about next year's event and many were offering suggestions about their favorite "Los Feliz" movies that they would like to see included in 2008. If you have any comments regarding this year's program or a recommendation for a film for next year's event, please drop an email to the Program Committee at program@LFIA.org. The only criterion for a film to be considered is that it must have at least one scene shot in Los Feliz.



Here is a list of this year's films

- The Searchers** – Warner Bros. 1956
Screenplay by: Frank S. Nugent
Directed by: John Ford
Location: Bronson Caves in Griffith Park
- True Romance** – Warner Bros. 1993
Screenplay by: Quentin Tarantino
Directed by: Tony Scott
Location: Vista Theatre
4473 Sunset Drive
- House on Haunted Hill** – Allied Artists 1959
Screenplay by: Robb White
Directed by: William Castle
Location: Ennis House
2655 Glendower Ave.
- L.A. Confidential** – Warner Bros. 1997
Screenplay by: Brian Koppelman & Curtis Hanson
Directed by: Curtis Hanson
Location: Lovell House
4616 Dundee Drive
designed by Richard Neutra
- Mulholland Falls** – MGM 1996
Screenplay by: Pete Dexter
Directed by: Lee Tamahori
Location: Amesbury Ave & Griffith Park Blvd
- The Two Jakes** – Paramount 1990
Screenplay by: Robert Towne
Directed by: Jack Nicholson
Location: Dresden Room
1760 N. Vermont Ave.
- War of the Colossal Beast** – Amer. Int'l. 1958
Screenplay by: George Worthing Yates
Directed by: Bert I. Gordon
Location: Griffith Observatory
- The Rocketeer** – Buena Vista 1991
Screenplay by: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo
Directed by: Joe Johnston
Location: Griffith Observatory
- Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle** – Columbia Pictures 2003
Screenplay by: John August, Cormac Wibberley & Marianne Wibberley
Location: Griffith Observatory
- Rebel Without a Cause** – Warner Bros. 1955
Screenplay by: Stewart Stern
Directed by: Nicholas Ray
Location: Griffith Observatory
- Grease** – Paramount 1978
Screenplay by: Bronte Woodard
Directed by: Randal Kleiser
Location: John Marshall High School
3939 Tracy Street

Top: Marian Dodge, Norman Mennes, Lynne Jewell, Chris Laib
Middle: John Ortega, Marilyn Bush, Margie Bird, June Teal
Bottom: Diane Kanner, Ron Weinstein

Booze at the Observatory continued from page 14

tradicts their own liquor variance request to use all of the Observatory at any time.

Liquor Service Zoning Variance, December, 2006

A later version of the Puck liquor variance dated December 19, 2006 was mailed to LFIA on January 22, 2007. It came not from Armbruster & Goldsmith, LLP, as the earlier draft had, but was redirected through Nancy Patterson of Urban Solutions, Inc., which identifies itself as real estate development consultants. The cover letter, which was copied to R. J. Comer, indicated that Patterson would be making any future presentations. It is not clear why Puck suddenly chose to change its public representative.

Puck avoided submitting an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this zoning variance by stating that "the Griffith Park (sic) Observatory Master Plan EIR No. 187-97 serves as the CEQA compliance document for this application." (p. 5) They further stated that "Denial of the request would unfairly impair/prevent the LADRP and the Applicant from enjoying reasonable use of the Observatory as a public space..." (p. 5) "For catered events to be successful, the responsible service of alcoholic beverages with food services is required." (p. 6). The gross sale of alcohol will exceed the gross sale of food on a quarterly basis (p. 13). "Granting a variance will not contribute to an undue over concentration for the area because the Observatory is socially desirable and convenient, and will contribute to the public welfare." (p. 10) How, one wonders, does the serving of alcoholic beverages contribute to the public welfare? Is this what Col. Griffith J. Griffith had in mind when he gave the Observatory to the people of Los Angeles?

The application recognizes the steep topography surrounding the Observatory several times (p. 5, 7). However, instead of noting the hazard of drunk drivers on the narrow, winding roads, it states that the steep topography means that there will be no impact to surrounding uses such as residences or park users! Have they forgotten that Councilman Hal Bernson's daughter was killed when she drove off the edge of Observatory Road after drinking?

The application incorrectly claims that there is only one access road to the Observatory (p. 6, 7) and that it is "well-bounded and easily secured" (p. 6). Those familiar with the Observatory know this is not true. It can be accessed from either Vermont or Western Canyon and that there are numerous trails leading to the Observatory as well.

Zoning Variance Hearing, March 13, 2007

LFIA opposes the serving or selling of alcoholic beverages at Observatory special events because this interferes with the mission of the Observatory which is scientific education. As LFIA president I wrote to the Zoning Administrator Albert Landini asking that he consider the negative impact the presence of alcohol may have on Observatory visitors, the plurality of which are children, nearby residents and other citizens who may be affected. "The Observatory has not needed to sell alcohol in its 71 years of existence, and we see no compelling reason to start now."

On March 13, the LFIA along with representatives of community organizations and stakeholders attended a Zoning Variance meeting at Los Angeles City Hall. Attendees supporting the variance were Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks Griffith Region Superintendent Vicki Israel, Puck attorneys and special events managers, and a local night club owner. Israel stated that it was important to "showcase" the Observatory after its \$93 million renovation.

At the time of the hearing Councilmember Tom LaBonge supported the use of alcohol at special events at the Observatory.

The Zoning Administrator was perturbed to hear that Recreation and Parks did not have guidelines ready, which they responded are "under review." Rec. and Parks ignored the fact that they already have guidelines, the ones promulgated by the Board of Recreation and Parks Commission on August 9, 2006. The Zoning Administrator ultimately ruled that he was reluctant to approve this variance in the absence of any guidelines as to parking, access, hours, number of events, size of events, noise issues, etc.

The preponderance of attendees opposed the granting of the variance. Those arguing against the variance included the LFIA, the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council, the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council, Los Feliz Estates Home Owners Association, the Oaks Homeowners Association, and the Los Feliz Village Business Improvement District, among others. The major objections were: lack of public input in the process; danger of drunk drivers; commercialization of Griffith Park; inappropriateness of special events; lack of parking; increased traffic and noise in the neighborhood; security; and the success of the Observatory for 70 years without alcohol.

Puck's representatives compared their variance application to those granted to the Autry National Center, LA Zoo, Greek Theatre and other Griffith Park institutions, when public hearings were routinely waived.

However, the majority of the neighborhood organizations and Park users present protested that those venues do not compare appropriately based on better road access, being on the flatter parts of the park and that their mission does not focus on astronomy education, including significant visitation by children.

As one opposing speaker put it, the grant from Colonel Griffith was that the Observatory was to be the "people's Observatory," not a pay-to-play special event venue for corporate America. One of the provisions in the variance is that parts of the Observatory could be cordoned off for special events during regular hours denying access to the general public.

The GGPNC Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation Committee, chaired by Kenneth Owen, submitted a list of restrictions regarding hours, number, and type of events to Puck. They were flatly dismissed by Puck as impossible.

At the meeting Councilmember Tom LaBonge proposed a 60-day delay until such time as Recreation and Parks can submit their guidelines for the events and until the community stakeholders can be integrated into the process. LaBonge proposed a committee be convened with neighborhood, city and public representatives to consider the appropriate number of events, their size, transportation, and other guidelines, prior to the granting of the liquor license. Public input will be taken until May 30.

Community meeting, March 29, 2007

On March 29, the Department of Recreation & Parks (RAP) held a community meeting at the Griffith Park Ranger Station regarding the guidelines it would impose on Wolfgang Puck Catering. The meeting was chaired by RAP's Vicki Israel, Superintendent, Griffith Region. Also speaking were Kevin Regan of RAP, and Dr. Krupp representing the Observatory. No written draft of the guidelines under discussion was provided for attendees.

Israel responded to written restrictions requested by GGPNC. The major areas of contention were the number of catered events to be permitted and the hours of service of alcohol.

Dr. Krupp explained that requests for special events would come to him for a recommendation of approval by Rec. and

continued on page 17

IN MEMORY OF James Howard Cremin, MD 1922 -2007

"Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls bloom."

~ Marcel Proust

Los Feliz has lost a dear friend and an invaluable asset in Howard Cremin. Howard is best known for the stories that he wrote for the Oaks Homeowners Association's newsletter, many of which were reprinted in *The Observer*. And, thankfully, his articles were published in the architectural book, *Los Feliz Oaks: A Place of Rare and Ineffable Charm*.

In a style uniquely and charmingly his own, he delighted us with his tales of the early Oaks residents. He researched his stories meticulously with attention to detail and accuracy, no doubt a habit he acquired during his many years as a pathologist. In chronicling the development and growth of the Oaks and its original residents, he gave the community a foundation on which to continue to grow and unite. Pathology was his profession, but local history was his passion.

Howard was a diligent volunteer on LFIA's History Committee for more than 10 years. He assisted in every aspect of our survey of historic resources in the Los Feliz area. He photographed numerous homes in the Oaks. If the home was barely visible from the street, he wouldn't accept a photograph that didn't do justice to the home concealed within a hedge. He would contact the homeowner and get permission for a close up.

Once the photographs were taken they had to be mounted to a working copy of the computer profile sheet on each building. Howard spent days walking the streets. This is probably the first time he's been called a street walker, but

walk he did to verify that the photographs had been attached to the correct profile sheet. In addition to checking addresses and photos, Howard added notes of historical interest about the homes. Walking the streets with Howard was a real treat as well as a learning experience--he was a walking encyclopedia of interesting tidbits about almost every home.

While working on the tedious task of transferring the photos from the working copies to the final printout of the survey, some members of the History Committee became discouraged because at the rate we were progressing, it would take another 10 years to complete the project. Howard came to our rescue. He enlisted the help of his friends Ron Kinney and John Yeomans, and they tackled the job on their own. The Tremendous Trio, as they came to be called, completed nearly one-third of the survey by themselves thus allowing us to bring our long-awaited survey to fruition.

Howard brought an infectious enthusiasm to every task. Once on a trip to the cavernous Hall of Records he found an early map of the Bronson area. "Look at this!" he exclaimed, and we all gathered around to admire his treasure. He found joy in everything he did. He was extraordinarily kind and thoughtful. When he came to History Committee meetings, he always brought a box of Viktor Benes marzipan cookies. Proust had his madeleines; I have marzipan cookies. Once he arrived at a History Committee meeting with two bouquets of flowers, one for local author/historian Diane Kanner and one for me. There was no special reason; he just wanted to thank us. He always made people feel special and important and brought out their best. Quite a gift--to make people bloom.

~Marian Dodge

Booze at the Observatory con't. from page 16
Parks General Manager Jon Kirk Mukri. Krupp pointed out that he is an employee of Rec. and Parks (translation: he has to do what the boss says). Kevin Regan of RAP stated that they (RAP) are the property owner and they can serve alcohol until 2:00 am.

After much heated discussion, Recreation and Parks "promised" that alcohol service would not be permitted after 10 p.m., that events would be limited to 1,000 people, and that no catered events would be permitted that excluded public access to Observatory facilities. They were vague and evasive when questioned about the total number of catered events that would be permitted, how they planned to handle the traffic from 1,000 guests, and other important issues.

Promising that conditions would be imposed on Wolfgang Puck Catering, but refusing to allow the public to see those conditions in writing, struck most of those in attendance as disingenuous. Speakers were outraged and public com-

ment was heated. Juliet Kiperman, chair of the LFIA Zoning Committee, told Israel that the public had given input to Nederlander's contract with the Greek Theatre and been ignored, and that we had given input to the Griffith Park Master Plan and been ignored. We no longer trust the city to seriously consider public input and would continue being vigilant.

RAP avowed that there would be no further public meetings nor information provided to the public before it submitted its final recommendations to the Zoning Administrator, who will render his ruling at a closed-door hearing on May 30. Many demanded a second meeting where Recreation and Parks' final conditions would be presented in writing to the public.

Due to the fact that RAP officials have been concentrating on recovery from the Griffith Park fire, they have not had time to complete the guidelines. As we go to press, LFIA is requesting that zoning administrator Landini extend the

deadline for public input. If another meeting is not scheduled, the LFIA and other community organizations will take additional steps to assure that the Observatory does not become L.A.'s newest party place.

In the meantime, you can voice your opinion to:

Councilmember Tom LaBonge at councilmember.Labonge@lacity.org
Jon Kirk Mukri of Recreation and Parks at JonKirk.Mukri@lacity.org
You should also send your comments directly to the Zoning Administrator who will make the decision.
albertlandini@aol.com

Living in a Landmark con't. from page 8

tour guide available outside the US. The Los Angeles section gives you a map of modern architecture in Los Feliz and Silver Lake. We're in the book.



Photo K. Louyse

The Griffith Jenkins Griffith statue at the corner of Crystal Springs and Los Feliz Boulevard recently underwent an extensive cleaning and renovation. It once again welcomes visitors to Griffith Park, looking very dapper.

Los Feliz Village Street Fair Held June 3rd on Vermont Avenue

The 16th annual Los Feliz Village Street Fair was held Sunday, June 3, on Vermont Avenue, between Hollywood and Franklin.

The fair, sponsored by the Los Feliz Village Business Improvement District, was free to the public.

The event featured live musical entertainment, food from local restaurateurs and merchandise exhibitors. In addition to a special "Green Space" featuring environmentally friendly, ecologically conscious products and services, there were beer and wine gardens operated by Vermont restaurant and Yuca's.

There were plenty of rides and games for the kids and more, including moon bounces, a petting zoo and pony rides.

Yuca's owner Dora Herrera, president of the LFVBID, commented, "The Los Feliz Street Fair has seen dramatic growth in recent years. As in the past, this has been a great testament to Los Feliz's enduring charms, including world-class restaurants, eclectic shopping and the unrivaled artistic spirit and sense of community found in the Los Feliz Village."

LFIA's Annual Photo Day Set for Nov. 3rd at Library

The annual Photo Day, sponsored by LFIA to collect old photos of people and places in the Los Feliz community, is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 3rd, from 2-5 p.m. at the Los Feliz Library, 1874 Hillhurst Ave.

People are invited to donate their old photos or bring them into the library to be copied on site. These photographs will be used in the library's archives and in the future for a book on Los Feliz history.

For more information, visit www.LFIA.org or call (323) 660.1914.



The LFIA is always well-represented at the Los Feliz Village Street Fair, once again having a booth at this year's 16th Annual Street Fair.

October Designated Architecture Month

The City of Los Angeles has designated October as Architecture Month.

Look for architectural events taking place throughout the city during the month of October on the American Institute of Architects LA Chapter's website by logging on to www.aialosangeles.org.

Special events will be held at the Los Feliz Library, in conjunction with its Architecture & Beyond Lecture Series.

Trashy Date

By Margret Lohfeld

"Would you like to go on a trashy date? How is next Tuesday?" Chris asks me. "You've got a deal! I'll bring everything we need; 9 a.m. sharp! OK?"

If that sounds somewhat risque, it's not; because (fellow LFIA board member) Chris Laib and I do go out there during the week - any week - to rid our beautiful neighborhood of unsightly debris; we take down all illegally posted signs from public property and paint out graffiti.

We spend about two to three hours on clean-up and wish people would not throw their cigarette butts and their trash on the street but find a proper receptacle. And we can't just blame those people from other parts of town, just driving through Los Feliz; if property owners and businesses would only keep the area in front of their places down to the curb clean every day our trashy date would not be so exhausting!

Visit www.LFIA.org for the next cleanup day.

Two Buck Golf Hike Proposed

A \$2 golf fee hike for all city golf courses is being proposed by the L. A. Department of Recreation and Parks for the promise of better fairways.

LFIA board member Angel Stewart who attended a meeting where it was announced that this increase would generate \$1.5 million needed for the capital improvements on the golf courses.

Such an increase for weekly golfers would be an additional \$104 per year.

James Ward, manager of golf for the city, did not respond to e-mails.

Photos from the LFIA General Meeting, held May 14th



Prior to the recent LFIA General Meeting at the Autry, firefighters were lauded for their role in preventing widespread damage to the community from the recent Griffith Park fire.



LFIA General Meeting Salutes Fire and Architecture

A salute to fire and architecture was the focus of LFIA spring General Meeting held May 14 at the Autry National Center.

LFIA Program Committee Co-chair Mary Rodriguez reorganized the program at the last minute in order to honor the firefighters who bravely fought the Griffith Park blaze six days earlier. The audience gave representatives from Stations 35 and 56 a standing ovation as they entered the auditorium. Rodriguez presented each firefighter with an LFIA T-shirt as Councilmember Tom LaBonge led the cheering. LFIA President Marian Dodge thanked the firefighters for saving the architectural jewels of Los Feliz.

LFIA board member Patti Ruben announced the winners of the annual Meliora Awards which recognize beautification projects in the neighborhood. Lyman Village Apartments won for best multiunit, 4031 Cromwell for best front garden, Lloyd Wright's Taggart House for best restoration, and the Griffith Observatory for best public space. Dr. Ed Krupp, Director of the Observatory and Camille Lombardo, Executive Director of Friends of the Observatory accepted the award for best public space. Eric Lloyd Wright accepted the award for the restoration of his father's house. (See winners by logging on to www.LFIA.org or in the next issue of the Observer.)

LFIA Board of Directors were elected by acclamation. New board members are Tom Ford, Hilary Misiano, Jim Schupp and Susann Tunick. Directors who were reelected are Sandra Collier, Marian Dodge, Krishna Gangadean, Margaret Goldsmith, Juliet Kiperman, Chuck Soter, Angela Stewart, June Teal, Valerie Vanaman, and Denise Wingate.

The program concluded with Jay Platt of the Los Angeles Conservancy making a presentation on examples of Los Feliz Historic-Cultural Monuments and other architectural treasures in the area. Platt declared that Los Feliz has the greatest concentration of modern residential architecture in the country. Where else can you find a Frank Lloyd Wright, a R. M. Schindler, and a Richard Neutra in the same block? Platt entertained the audience with a mini-lesson in modernist architecture. Many members exclaimed later that they had learned so much about the community they have lived in for 30 years.

It was both an emotional and enlightening evening.



photo, above: Architect Eric Wright, John Gray and Brenda Levin. Wright received the award for best restoration project at the event.



photo, right: Kris Gangadean and Donna Zenor enjoy the fare before the event.

Ecologist Reflects on Griffith Park Fire

Back in March, I was asked by some community groups to research and prepare species lists for Griffith Park – basically to dig up and organize observations of folks who had visited the park and taken notes. It seemed straightforward, and I figured I'd be inundated with data and recollections.

Asking around, the reactions I got from my biologist friends were either confused looks, or brief mentions of the common species we see every day, like deer, coyotes, Red-tailed Hawks and fence-lizards.

As we've begun to catalogue the plant and animal species of the park, we've documented animals I'd expect in the remote western Santa Monicas persisting in Griffith Park, like the Western Gray Squirrel, Purple Finch, and Western Whiptail (a big, striped lizard).

On May 8, the inevitable happened - Griffith Park was hit with another fire, but this time, it spread faster than the usual ones, and charred 20% of the habitat in the park. Fortunately, the fire did no major damage to people or structures, and the plantings it took out in the interior of the park can be redone where appropriate.

So what natural elements were lost? It's hard to say. Neither Griffith Park nor any city park in Los Angeles has ever had a staff ecologist or a habitat management plan, so even for the most well-known animal groups, like birds, we have little information on where threatened or sensitive species may occur. A large amount of oak woodland burned in Griffith Park, but we can only guess whether this supported things like the rare Arboreal Salamander, which requires shady oak woodland, often along streams.

Whatever the fire will bring, large areas of the park will be changed for several years, regardless of whether we drop seed from airplanes and irrigate hillsides, or just sit back and wait.



photo K. Louyse©

Sky-blue Lazuli Buntings may appear in droves next April, singing from blackened sumac trunks, as they have done after fires elsewhere in the Santa Monicas. Species that require patches of bare ground (and that have become rare in recent years) like Side-blotched Lizard may get a boost.

Native plants will return, first wild cucumber vines and fire-following wildflowers, then the larger oaks and toyon and other shrubs. Depending on rainfall, non-native mustard may appear as a sea of yellow, or it may be out-numbered by delicate purple lupines and pink Clarkia.

In the meantime, feel free to send me your notable observations from the park.

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