

# Los Feliz Observer



LOS FELIZ IMPROVEMENT  
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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

Spring 2005

## Planned Chaos? May 2006 Observatory Re-opening Date Guarantees Traffic Meltdown in Northeast Los Angeles

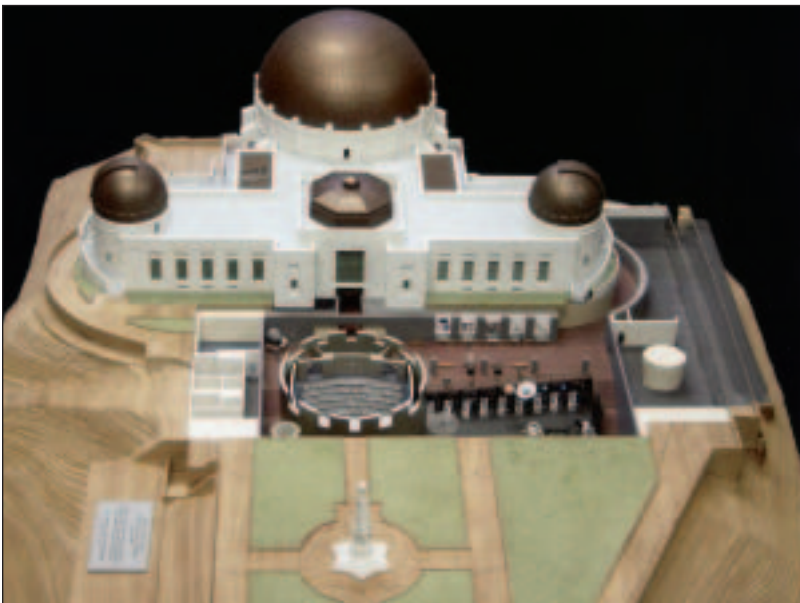
by Charlotte De Armond

**D**espite the focused efforts and expressed concerns of the Los Feliz Improvement Association (LFIA), the City has chosen to schedule the long-awaited re-opening of the beloved Griffith Observatory to coincide with the Greek Theatre's 2006 Season and all the congestion it brings annually to our streets and boulevards.

Take a moment to imagine the gridlock that will occur: Picture the Golden State (5) and Hollywood (101) Freeways and the backup on the ramps and avenues leading to and from them. Picture the spillover of frantic drivers onto normally quiet streets as they search desperately for detours around the snarl.

Picture yourself trying to get home from work or trying to shop for groceries, bank or pick up your cleaning. Imagine you are a local merchant whose business is off because it's suddenly become impossible for your customers to get to your restaurant, shop or service—much less find a parking space. Imagine you are a

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## Yuca's Receives Prestigious James Beard Culinary Honor

by Lynne Jewell

**L**os Feliz's own Yuca's was saluted as one of four restaurants in the United States to receive the 2005 James Beard Foundation's "American Classics" Award for culinary excellence. To qualify as a "Classic," you must be a "restaurant with timeless appeal, beloved for quality food that reflects the history and character of its community." To be nominated, the establishment must have been in existence for at least 10 years, be locally owned, and offer on-site seating.



*Pictured are owners Socorro "Mama" and daughter Dora*

The James Beard Foundation Awards are the premier honors for fine food and beverage professionals in North America. Established in 1990, the Awards recognize and honor excellence and achievement within the culinary industry. More than 60 awards are given annually to chefs, restaurateurs, cookbook authors, journalists, broadcasters, and restaurant and graphic designers.

Yuca owners Socorro and Dora Herrera accepted the coveted Award, a bronze medallion engraved with the image of James Beard, on Monday, May 2, at gala festivities in New York City attended by more than 1,600 culinary leaders from across the country. Theme of the Awards ceremony and reception was a Chef's Tribute to Julia Child and featured tribute dishes prepared by over 30 chefs, many of whom knew Child over the years.

Socorro and Jaime Herrera started Yuca's in 1976 with moneys received from a work accident suffered by Jaime. They took a gamble that paid off

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## Ducks Hatch at the Autry National Center

As Angelinos were rising and shining this morning, a mama mallard sat quietly and patiently atop a dozen tan eggs. One by one, the ground shook below her and tiny brown beaks sprang forth from their shells, taking in their first breath of fresh air. Surrounded by the hospitable habitat of native western grass and pond, the hatchlings burst out in the secure back lot of the Autry National Center in Griffith Park.

Trails West, where they are currently ensconced, is an outdoor exhibit filled with indigenous plants of the West and a soothing waterfall that filters down into the pond—a perfect habitat for native animals. Recently used as the staging area for the Gold Panning program, Trails West has been an unassuming yet inviting sanctuary within the museum.

At present, the mama mallard and her hatchlings are secure and protected by California State law; thus, public access to Trails West will be limited until the ducks sprout feathers and fly off into the sunset, a process that is projected to take up to 30 days. During this time, visitors will be able to view the scenery and catch a glimpse of the ducks through large floor-to-ceiling windows.

When asked about why she chose to nestle at the Autry, mama mallard commented, "I'm just a lucky duck with a Western heart." The Autry is considering granting the ducks an all-season membership pass which allows them access to both the Autry National Center and the Southwest Museum—in case they seek to relocate to Mt. Washington.



Photo by Tony Bailey.

## John Yeomans Remembered

The LFIA has lost one of its most dedicated members: John Yeomans, a member of the Board of Directors and chair of the Membership Committee for many years, died April 14, at the age of 81 after a three-year battle with a virulent infection.



John Yeomans

John was actively involved in the LFIA History Committee and worked on the mammoth Los Feliz Historical Survey for twelve years. His wicked wit kept us all laughing and on our toes. He and his friends, Howard Cremin and Ron Kinney, undertook the task of verifying that each photograph was attached to the correct address in the Oaks on the survey sheets. Dubbed "The Tremendous Trio," they quickly completed their assigned area long before the rest of us. Again it was John's lively wit that made light work of this tedious task. Howard commented that John knew so many people that he gave them an entree and facilitated whatever job they had to do. Even after John had knee replacement surgery and was unable to walk much, he came out to help us decorate the holiday tree on Vermont Avenue. He cajoled us and encouraged us as we tried to arrange ornaments and figure out why the lights wouldn't work.

LFIA was only one of John's services to the community. He also served on the board of the Los Feliz Oaks Homeowners' Association where he was considered one of the "dependables." If they needed someone to sell raffle tickets at the annual picnic, John would do it. If they needed another traffic guard to watch out for the kids on the Halloween Walk, John would be there. He also volunteered several hours each week at the Los Feliz Community Police Center and at Recordings for the Blind. In his own quiet way, John worked ceaselessly to make our neighborhoods, our world, a better place.

John was born in 1923 in Chicago, Illinois, and grew up in Wisconsin. During World War II as a young medic, fresh from Oberlin College, John slogged along with the "Big Red One" from Omaha Beach to Czechoslovakia, where the Nazis surrendered. Later he was the west coast representative for Paul Hansen Lamps, a high-end lamp company. In 1963 he met commercial designer Dick Sharpe professionally when Dick was working on the model homes for the Los Feliz Estates. They were partners for 42 years in their cozy home in the Los Feliz Oaks, where John was a familiar sight in his dashing Mercedes Benz. In spite of health problems in his later years, John never lost his sense of humor. He continued to keep abreast of current events, which provided inspiration for his jokes. One of the nurses at the hospital commented on how many visitors John had. It was not surprising. He was a close neighbor, a dear friend, a person of culture and, at times, the indispensable man. "Goodbye to you my trusted friend. We had joy, we had fun, we had seasons in the sun."

*Howard Cremin, Marian Dodge, Mike Lyons, and Dick Sharpe contributed to this piece.*

## Announcement

The annual Los Feliz Street Fair will be held June 5, 2005, between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on Vermont Avenue, between Franklin and Prospect.

## Spring 2005

The *Los Feliz Observer* is published by the Los Feliz Improvement Association.

**Editor:** Robert Fouyer

**Editorial Associate:** Charlotte De Armond

### LFIA Purpose

The Los Feliz Improvement Association is engaged 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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### Los Feliz Improvement Association

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The *Los Feliz Observer* is published quarterly and one of the benefits of membership in the Los Feliz Improvement Association (LFIA), a non-profit corporation that is tax-exempt under 501(C)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. Membership dues are \$30.00 annually.

# President's Commentary

by Donna Zenor

## Are We There Yet?

Over my years on the Board of the Los Feliz Improvement Association (LFIA) and, in virtually every piece I have written for the Observer, I have voiced "process" as the paramount consideration in responding to developments affecting Los Feliz, its residents and businesses and, most importantly, Griffith Park, for which LFIA has assumed a stewardship role. My commitment to "process" is categorically not based on the assumption that if "process" is correctly observed, our views will be embraced by all. It is not rooted in the conviction that failing to win a point simply means proponents of the opposing view have somehow subverted the system.

And progress has been made. Over the past year genuine efforts have been made by governmental officials and representatives, including Councilmember Tom LaBonge whose district includes Los Feliz and Griffith Park, to improve communications and involve various constituencies throughout the district before recommendations affecting us are delivered as a fait accompli.

But we are not there yet. Two major current developments demonstrate woeful handling from the perspective of process.

In this issue, our Chairman of the Board, Charlotte De Armond, writes of the irresponsible, even cavalier, approach that has been taken to the pending re-opening of Griffith Park Observatory in just over a year, an event that will have a dramatic and negative effect on our already massive traffic problems and on our residents who live on the three streets leading into the park.

The delivery of the long-awaited Master Plan for Griffith Park, which is the primary subject of this piece, has occasioned howls of shock, anger and frustration from many quarters and sent governmental representatives scrambling to attempt to address what is, if they did not actually know, they certainly should have suspected would be, widespread negative community reaction fanned by a clear perception that, indeed, the system has been "subverted."

By way of history: In 2003, the Department of Recreation and Parks embarked on the process of creating a new Master Plan for Griffith Park. After Melendrez Design Partners was selected to facilitate the development of the Plan, a series of three focus group workshops were held to solicit public input and ideas. Many members of LFIA, as well as hundreds of other citizens, actively took part in these workshops. We were gratified that the Department was interested in our views and fully expected the balance of the planning process to be just as open and cooperative.

Unfortunately, after the last of the public workshops in the summer of 2003, the Master Plan process for all intents and purposes became closed to the public. LFIA and other interested organizations made repeated efforts over the past year and a half to determine the status of the Master Plan and the parameters shaping it, but received only vague assurances that it would "please" us and that we would "like what's in it."

Such assurances provided little comfort given that over this same period a number of events evidenced that not only was the Master Plan being

*(continued on page 11)*



## For the Record

The aerial shot of Vermont Avenue shown in the 2004 Fall/Winter issue of the Observer, was taken in 1926, not 1912.



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# *The Los Feliz* Improvement Association

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## **We Need Your Support**

Dear Los Feliz Members, Neighbors and Friends

The Los Feliz Improvement Association has been committed to maintaining and improving our beautiful neighborhood for the past 89 years. Now is the time that we ask you to help us by joining or renewing your membership.

### **Just a few reasons why *YOU* should join if you are not already a member:**

- The Zoning Committee spends many hours in the arduous process to uphold the City's Building and Safety codes that permit the defining characteristics of Los Feliz to stay alive. We remain vigilant to prevent any late night activities that harm the piece and quiet of neighborhood residents. We closely monitor film shooting permits that impede traffic or disturb the piece of the community.
- The Beautification Committee works hard to maintain the beauty of Los Feliz by organizing monthly cleanup/graffiti paint-outs along major streets and around our schools. Throughout the year we use your dues to purchase, plant and maintain the historic Deodar Cedar trees that line Los Feliz Blvd. Aside from their beauty and helping absorb traffic noise, the trees are an important factor that helps prevent the City from widening Los Feliz Blvd. to accommodate more traffic through our neighborhood.
- The Traffic, Streets, Parking and Lighting Committee had been working with the City's Mobility Action Committee (MAC), which was previously convened by the Department of Transportation to deal with traffic problems in Los Feliz and Griffith Park. This past year the committee was inactivated by the City. Our committee is continuing our efforts to have the MAC Committee restored. The intersection of Los Feliz Blvd. and Riverside for re-signalization by the City is being closely monitored.
- The LFIA Schools Committee continues to be committed to our neighborhood schools. Our members assist with campus beautification, support specialized academic opportunities and liaison with administrators and elected officials regarding traffic and safety issues around neighborhood campuses.
- The Parks Committee is dedicated to preserving Griffith Park and protecting it from those who view it as a vast vacant land beaconing for development. Griffith Park is a habitat to a variety of mammals, reptiles and birds rarely, if ever, seen in other parts of the City. It is also home to world-class museums and cultural institutions, as well as abundant recreational facilities. Balancing all of these within the Park is a delicate task.
- You will receive quarterly Los Feliz Observer newsletters to keep you abreast of what is happening in your community.
- As a member of LFIA you will be invited to attend our General Meetings, which are held quarterly at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage. In the past, topics have ranged from: The History of Griffith Park and Griffith G. Griffith, William Mulholland and his legacy to Los Feliz and Los Angeles, programs on the Zoo and Observatory, ballot issues, our schools, safety and water resources for the Park. Our noted speakers have included: the Mayor, City Attorney, Chief of Police and City councilpersons.
- Building a true sense of "Neighborhood."

**If You Are Not a Member of Your Neighborhood Association,  
Please Join Today. Membership Envelope/Application is Enclosed.**

# Your Los Feliz Improvement Association in Action

## Zoning Committee

**Juliet Kiperman/Mike Lyons, Co-chairs**

To the members of the LFIA who serve on this committee, the work we do often feels like the blood and guts of the organization. It's easy to love Los Feliz; it's an arduous process to uphold the City's building codes that allow the defining characteristics of Los Feliz to stay alive. To put it plainly, we spend a lot of time at zoning administrator hearings requesting that an application for yet another over-height wall not be given a variance. Over-height walls and shrubbery are a scourge on our community. The police tell us they make homes more susceptible to robbery. They are fundamentally changing the open, park-like character of Los Feliz into a walled city. Every over-height wall is a nail in the coffin to any feelings of neighborhood.

Sometimes our efforts fail, but more often they succeed. We joined forces with several neighborhood associations to shut down a squatter home that had become a den of criminal activity (drug sales, prostitution, even a suicide) in the Oaks. We've worked hard to prevent Los Feliz Boulevard from being turned into an illegal used car lot. We have fought to prevent construction in and around the boulevard that would worsen the traffic gridlock. We have had illegal and/or sexually offensive billboards removed. While we sincerely wish success to the restaurants in our town, we remain vigilant to prevent any late night activities that harm the peace and quiet of the neighboring residents.

Many folks in Los Feliz work in the entertainment industry and we are always glad when production money is spent in our City rather than Vancouver. At the same time, there are limits to how much a shooting permit can impede traffic or disturb the peace of the community. We keep an eye on them, too.

If you have any questions or problems to report, or if you have an interest in attending a meeting or joining this committee, please phone the LFIA hotline, 323 660-1914.

## Los Feliz Observer Committee

**Bob Fouyer, Chair**

I am sad to say that this issue of the Observer will be my last as editor. I have been the editor for over nine years and feel it's time for someone else to carry on from here. I have enjoyed the experience very much and appreciate all the help I have received over the years from our board members and others who have contributed to its content. I



Juliet Kiperman



Mike Lyons

particularly want to express my appreciation to board member Charlotte De Armond, who has helped me a great deal in the editing of the Observer. I want to thank also Macson Printing in Glendale for their professionalism, and the fantastic job they do on the layout and helping me put the Observer together every issue. Last, but not least, I want to thank the advertisers for their financial help. The ad revenue they provide helps make it possible to continue publishing a newsletter of this quality.

As in the past, this spring issue of the Los Feliz Observer is being mailed to all Los Feliz homeowners. Although it is expensive to do this, we feel that it's justified as it helps attract new members who may not know anything about the LFIA and what we do for the community. Enclosed in this issue is a membership application for new members wishing to join. It can also be used for our existing members to renew their membership if they haven't already done so. As a reminder, if anyone misses an issue of the Observer, they can view past issues on our web site ([www.lfia.com](http://www.lfia.com)).

## Parks Committee

**Chuck Soter, Chair**

The Parks Committee's main goal is to preserve and restore Griffith Park. An adjunct goal is to help the City in its quest to find and acquire sites for additional small parks. During the past two years, and for the foreseeable future, LFIA and the Parks Committee in particular, has been, and will continue to take a very active role in the formulation of the new Griffith Park Master Plan.

Regarding preservation and restoration, two areas are receiving a great deal of our attention. Toyon Canyon Landfill, which has historically been earmarked for a return to its original, natural environment, is now being considered for recreational fields. The LFIA opposes development on Toyon, and has urged the City to continue using the Griffith Park's developed perimeter, rather than its deep interior, for recreational facilities. We are now in the process, along with City officials, of identifying alternative sites for these facilities.

On the north end of the Park, the DWP's Headworks area has been designated for new underground water storage to replace Silver Lake Reservoir. The LFIA agreed to the City's plan creating a passive recreational area and preserve above and contiguous to the tanks. However, because of Federal budget constraints possibly affecting those plans, and because the Headworks has been mentioned in the first public draft of the Griffith Park Master Plan as a possible site for conflicting uses, we will monitor the project's progress to assure that the final results are acceptable.

The Griffith Observatory is scheduled to re-open in 2006. The LFIA is, and will continue to be in constant contact with the City, the Observatory and Friends of the Observatory

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Chuck Soter



Bob Fouyer

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## May 2006 Observatory Re-opening

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bus-dependent traveler whose bus is perpetually behind schedule because it is mired in traffic. Imagine you are a Griffith Park user who can no longer play an after-work game of golf, hike, or horseback ride because the time you would have enjoyed recreating is spent in a slow crawl to the Park. Imagine you are a homeowner trying to sell your property and buyers have become scarce because night and day traffic congestion have made Los Feliz, Franklin Hills, the Oaks, Atwater Village and Silver Lake less attractive places to live.

Finally, imagine you are a party of visitors trying to reach the newly re-opened Observatory. You are sucked into a traffic jam that starts a few miles south, east or west of Los Feliz. You creep along watching your gas tank and enthusiasm wane. You see repeated acts of road-rage-induced rudeness. By the time you reach the hill you're already frazzled, your party's mood has soured and all anyone can think of is finding a restroom.

### How could such a fundamental mistake have occurred?

Let us begin at the beginning. When the late City Council President John Ferraro asked me in 1999 to serve on the Voluntary Neighborhood Oversight Committee (VNOC) for the Griffith Observatory renovation, I was delighted. My assignment was to make sure that public funds for the reconstruction and expansion were spent judiciously. My reward was the continuing pleasure I experienced in being a part of a group that was dedicated to conserving all that the Observatory has stood for, while fostering a renovated and expanded facility that would become a world-renowned center for study of the sky.

As plans for the renovation were developed and a mockup of the proposed design was completed, Observatory Director Dr. Ed Krupp hosted a series of meetings to which the community was invited. He and Friends of the Observatory (FOTO) staff and volunteers solicited comment and made an obvious effort to keep the neighborhood informed. I attended those meetings, and felt confident that there was open and respectful exchange between Observatory leaders and the neighboring community that would be directly affected during the reconstruction and after the Observatory re-opening.

### Meltdown I: The Observatory's Closing

I question if even Dr. Krupp or FOTO Executive Director Camille Lombardo anticipated the numbers of Los Angeles residents that would want to visit the Observatory before its official closing on January 7, 2003. Certainly, City officials from the Department of Transportation (DOT), LAPD, the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) as well as Fourth District Councilmember Tom La Bonge had to be surprised when approximately 10,000 people a day clogged Los Feliz Blvd., Vermont Avenue, Fern Dell and all adjacent streets over the 2002 Christmas and New Year's Holiday up until and including January 7. We must assume that no one involved foresaw that thousands would turn out simply because the Observatory was going to be closed for a few

years. Nothing was done by the City to handle the ensuing crowds. As a result, Los Feliz residents were virtually stranded in their homes for long periods because there was no way to access Los Feliz Blvd. or Vermont Avenue, and traffic gridlock affected everyone traveling through our area.

### Meltdown II: The Traffic Jam to Mars

And then in August 2003, Planet Mars made its closest orbit to earth in our lifetime. Again, Angelenos wanted to be part of the action. By that time, the City had established the Observatory Satellite in the Zoo parking lot and the Vermont and Fern Dell entrances to Griffith Park were closed routinely at sunset. The Observatory Satellite offered Mars viewings but the message to go there, instead of the closed Observatory on the hill, was not received by the public. Since no signs were posted at the Vermont/Los Feliz intersection directing viewers east, or even informing that the road into Griffith Park was closed at sunset, when the "early birds" went up the hill on Vermont, they were stuck there; no one could get down. Police and Fire department personnel couldn't get in. The traffic island on Vermont Avenue became a raucous parking lot, and families settled in for a long night, firing up the braziers they had brought with them to cook their dinners. For the second time, lack of City planning and follow-up had made Los Feliz an island, thereby forcing commuters through our area to hunt for alternate routes.

### Meltdown III: We Still Can Avoid It

Having absorbed these two dramatic lessons, the LFIA Board of Directors was determined to prevent a third. In November 2003, President Donna Zenor appointed an ad hoc committee of the Board to address the Griffith Observatory re-opening. At meetings on January 6, and February 3, 2004, the committee agreed that LFIA must take an active role immediately to address the major traffic problems the community would encounter, especially during the first year. People would come from around the world to see this new Los Angeles wonder. But so would everyone who lived in Los Angeles. And then everyone in LA would want to show off "their" Observatory to all of their own out-of-town guests.

Our ad hoc committee met with Dr. Krupp, Camille Lombardo and FOTO board member Kara Knack at a lengthy meeting on February 23, 2004. We told them we would be happy to take an active role in resolving re-opening problems and discussed all aspects of the re-opening with them, including the following:

- Using a reservation system (similar to the Getty opening), in order to restrict the number of visitors to the Observatory at any one time;
- Restricting the number of cars allowed to park at the Observatory parking lot by requiring cars entering on Vermont to have a reservation;
- Charging for parking at the Observatory lot. Offering free parking at other Griffith Park lots such as the Western Canyon entrance on Fern Dell and the Zoo parking lot;

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## Los Feliz Improvement Association

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regarding traffic, transportation and other matters to assure a relatively painless experience for our neighborhood, as well as the millions who will visit the Observatory in 2006.

One other major concern: Because of budget cuts and other priorities, it has been proposed that the City's Park Rangers be folded into the General Services Department. The LFIA has strongly urged that the Park Rangers, who provide excellent and professional service, be retained as a dedicated unit. If the Rangers are eliminated, the City will quickly realize what has been irretrievably lost. For example, when the Observatory reopens, professional and knowledgeable manpower will be critical for an organized and safe event. To eliminate the Rangers, who have infinitely more experience within the Park than do General Services officers, would be an incredibly short-sighted measure.

### Traffic, Streets, Parking, Lighting Committee

#### Dennis Chew, Chair

This Committee was at a disadvantage last year because of the inactivity of the Mobility Action Committee (MAC), which was previously convened by the Department of Transportation (LADOT) to deal with traffic problems in Los Feliz and Griffith Park. The Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) and the LFIA are continuing our efforts to restore MAC and its monthly meetings that address the traffic problems around Los Feliz.

The recent request of LADOT to review the intersection at Los Feliz Blvd. and Riverside Dr. for re-signalization has come to the top of their list.

We are continuing to request LADOT to re-evaluate the intersections along Los Feliz Blvd. at Griffith Park, Hillhurst and Vermont Avenue, in hopes that refinements to the signalization along these boulevards will improve traffic flow.

It is important that we report all potholes to the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Street Services at (213) 473-8410 or (800) 996-2489. Due to the heavy rains, a pothole, no matter how small, will ultimately grow larger and more hazardous.

The Griffith Park Master Plan draft was unveiled at a neighborhood meeting at Friendship Auditorium on March 30. Future meetings will be announced in advance and it's important that everyone participate and attend these public meetings.

### Beautification Committee

#### Margret Lohfeld, Chair

Our monthly "anti-graffiti events" continue. We also occasional do weekday cleanups. In addition, we pick up discarded trash and remove



Dennis Chew



Margret Lohfeld

illegal signs that are posted to telephone poles and trees throughout the area—particularly on weekends.

Trash barrels left on the street after pick-up continue to be a problem and an eyesore for the neighborhood. Most residents are good about bringing them in, either after pick-up or in the evening. It appears to be the same residents every week that create the problem. In some cases the barrels are left out several days after the pick-up and, in some cases, never put away.

So far this year we have planted seven deodar cedar trees along Los Feliz Boulevard. We want to plant more, but these trees are expensive and cost about \$900 each. Anyone interested in donating the cost of a tree or partially contributing to the cost, please call me at 323 660-1914.

### Membership Committee

#### Denise Wingate, Chair

For those of you who are not members of the LFIA or have not renewed yet, please take a moment to read through this spring issue of the Observer. Although we continue to attract new members every year, we need your support. Your membership dues help finance all of the various committees and activities you read about in this publication. Los Feliz continues to be one of the most desirable places to live in our city, as is evident by the growing number of new residents. It is our hope that everyone who lives in our area will become a member of the LFIA and support the neighborhood we all work so hard to maintain and protect.



Denise Wingate

### Schools Committee

#### Mary Beth Sorenson

The LFIA Schools Committee is committed to supporting our neighborhood schools! During the past year, our members have assisted with campus beautification efforts at King Middle School and Marshall High School. Plans are also in the works to help beautify the Los Feliz Elementary School campus.

We have supported specialized academic opportunities at our local public schools such as the FAME night at Franklin Elementary School and the academic decathlon team at Marshall.

Our committee members continue to liaison with administrators and elected officials regarding traffic and safety issues around neighborhood campuses, in particular King Middle School and Los Feliz Elementary School. However, the most important issue facing us this year will be the opportunity to provide input regarding a site for the new school that will relieve the overcrowded conditions and year-round school schedules at King and Marshall. This is a time of opportunity and we welcome your involvement!



Mary Beth Sorenson

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## Los Feliz Improvement Association

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### History Committee

**Marian Dodge, Chair**

The History Committee held a very successful Photo Day Tea in October. (See the Fall/Winter 2004 Observer.) Many people brought in old pictures for us to copy. We are particularly grateful to John Marshall High School alumni and ladies from the Los Feliz Woman's Club for sharing their invaluable memories of Los Feliz. This is an ongoing project to gather a collection of photographs that capture the spirit of Los Feliz. Our goal is to publish a pictorial history of life in Los Feliz. Through the photo project we met several fascinating people that we can interview to add to our collection of oral histories.



Marian Dodge

The second edition of our award winning book, *The History of the Los Feliz Improvement Association*, makes a fine gift for a new neighbor, or for old friends who have moved away. Members can order the book for \$12.00 (a savings of \$4.00) when they renew their LFIA membership. See the membership envelope in this issue of the Observer. It is also available at Skylight Books for \$16.00.

The Los Feliz Historical Survey, available to you at the Los Feliz Library reference desk, contains basic historical

data on 3,000 residences in Los Feliz. The Los Angeles Planning Department's preservation consulting firm has taken the data that the History Committee consolidated over a twelve year period and entered it in the city's historical inventory data base.

### Program Committee

**Marilyn Bush**

Four times each year, LFIA holds a general meeting in the theatre of the Autry National Center (formerly known as the Autry Museum of Western Heritage). We are indebted to the generosity of the Autry, which enables us to have meetings in such a gracious environment.



Marilyn Bush

Program planning is developed with input from members and we endeavor to bring current issues of interest and importance to Los Feliz residents. The most recent program (January 24, 2005) was "A Dialog With Councilman Tom LaBonge." Last year included an evening with Chief of Police William Bratton, and an outstanding special meeting with the captains of our fire stations and the Northeast Police Station, which was held at Fire Station No.35 on Hillhurst.

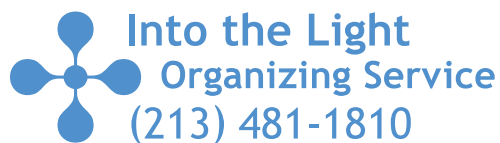
Notices of each meeting are sent to all members of the LFIA and those on our general meeting list. Everyone, however, is welcome to attend.

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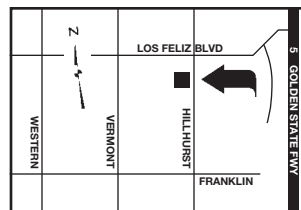


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---

## President's Commentary

(continued from page 3)

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formulated without public participation but often in direct opposition to overwhelming public sentiment as voiced at the workshops. By way of example:

- Soon after the workshops were held, a high-end destination restaurant was proposed for the Observatory, notwithstanding that the clear consensus of workshop participants was that there should be no new development within Griffith Park. After strong opposition was expressed to the destination restaurant concept at a Commission meeting, one Commissioner simply turned and publicly instructed the Department representative to “put the restaurant in the Master Plan.” Further opposition led to the tabling of the proposal, but the Commissioner’s demonstrated attitude toward the Master Plan process is illustrative of the problems faced.
- Without public knowledge or consultation, a motion was placed before the City Council to develop ball fields in Toyon Canyon, previously a landfill, although public sentiment at the workshops was strongly supportive of preserving the Park’s natural interior, including Toyon, and the fact that Toyon’s existing post-closure plan calls for a return to a natural environment.
- A motion favoring a Silverlake Senior Center in Griffith Park was passed by the City Council’s Arts, Parks, Health and Aging Committee after the Committee was assured

that it had been approved by the Griffith Park and Los Feliz communities. Such a proposal had not been approved and, indeed, had never been formally presented to those communities.

We have since provided constructive input, including proposed alternative sites for the Toyon and Senior Center projects but were forced to do so reactively and, practically speaking, with far less leverage, because the community had once again been ignored in the process.

The Master Plan was posted on the internet in mid-March. The second page of the document states that it was “prepared with the assistance of” a broad range of community organizations, including Neighborhood Councils, the Audubon Society, Equestrian Trails International, the Sierra Club and LFIA. Based on calls LFIA members have had with senior representatives of the majority of the organizations cited, such organizations, and certainly LFIA itself, disavow the report in its entirety, taking issue with the methodology and assumptions under which it was prepared and to the conclusions and recommendations incorporated.

Substantively, the Master Plan is a hodgepodge of special interest projects that fly in the face of the acknowledgement throughout the document of overcrowding, overuse, traffic problems, erosion and other forms of environmental degradation and safety concerns, all occasioned by the fact that Griffith Park currently accommodates more than 10,000,000 visitors annually. Included in the Master Plan are two aerial tramways—one to run between the L.A. Zoo and what the report now has designated “Toyon Vista” (“landfill,” while accurate, was apparently not considered reflective of installations being considered for the site), and another to the Observatory from a new parking garage to be built at one of several alternative sites, including north of the Greek Theatre. The statement that “the tram will be an attraction and a fun ride” would make anyone even remotely concerned about preservation of the Park blanch. New, multi-level parking garages are mentioned several times through the Master Plan, including those to accommodate the aerial tramways and one to replace the merry-go-round lot. The statement that “destination restaurant(s) and other types of food service facilities shall be considered for the Park on a case by case basis,” is testimony to the fact that bad ideas continue to turn up like bad pennies when backed by special interests with the ear of our representatives at City Hall.

We have been informed that in light of the outrage, which has been expressed over the draft of the Master Plan, the Department of Recreation and Parks and Councilmember LaBonge have agreed to designate a Citizen’s Advisory Panel to work with the Department and the City to address concerns raised. Given LFIA’s commitment to preserve Griffith Park for the enjoyment of future generations for whom the experience of a true park will be a rarity, we will participate actively in the effort and do our utmost to prevent further commercialization and trivialization of the Park.

As always, we are hopeful that this time will be different. But we are not there yet.

In Los Feliz . . .

*Charles Shaffer*

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## Yuca's Receives Culinary Honor

(continued from page 1)

in spades by using the windfall to chase the American dream instead of paying off existing bills. Today, Yuca's is renowned for serving excellent food in a friendly atmosphere.

The early days were hard as the Herreras worked with their son, Jaime, Jr., grossing approximately twenty dollars per day. Jaime Jr. flagged down passing cars and made the drivers an offer they couldn't refuse: "Try our food and if you don't like it we'll refund your money."

"Mama," as customers soon started calling Socorro, enticed customers in her own way by grilling onions throughout the day, enticing new customers with their fragrance!

One of their early customers was the food critic at the Los Angeles Times. She came often and chatted with the couple, unaware that they barely understood the language. One day she told them that she'd written an article about their establishment for the newspaper. She offered to help out the day the article came out by answering the phone and told them to make sure to prepare lots of food. Socorro and Jaime agreed, not understanding about the stampede that was to occur. The phone did ring and Mindy, true to her word, answered that phone all day long, enthusiastically informing callers that she was the writer of the article and enticing all to drop by and try the food. The publication of that article was a turning point for the Herreras and, for the first time, all the food was sold before the end of the day.

Word-of-mouth soon spread the news about the tiny hut in Los Feliz with great food and friendly folks.

The youngest daughter, Dora, after graduating from Brown University in 1980, joined her parents at Yuca's fulltime. Together the trio helped make Yuca's what it is today: the premier place for excellent Mexican food and a friendly community hangout. Since Jamie's recent death, mother and daughter carry on.

Yuca's is truly a family affair with other members of the family pitching in with extra hands. Margarita, the Herrera's older daughter, and Pilar Boris, Socorro's sister, lend a hand at the Los Feliz Village Street Fair (this year, on Sunday, June 5th) and at other charity events that Yuca's participates in throughout the year. On May 13, 2005, Yuca's will be manning a booth at the El Faro fundraiser at the Henry Ford Theater to help raise funds for the kids at that orphanage.

Since that first article in the Times, Yuca's has also been featured in USA Today, New York Times, Los Angeles Magazine, Sunset, Vanity Fair, GQ, Elle and Travel & Leisure. Elmer Dills, food critic on radio and TV, once gave them a 4.5 star rating on his scale of 5. When questioned by Socorro, Elmer replied that he didn't give her a 5 "because that would leave nothing for any other establishment to aspire to."

A five-minute documentary shot for the Silver Lake Film Festival in 2001 (Conquistadora by local filmmaker Mia Trachinger) featuring Dora, along with eight other shorts by local filmmakers, is available for viewing at the Los Feliz Public Library.

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## May 2006 Observatory Re-opening

(continued from page 7)

- Establishing a Shuttle system to move Observatory patrons to the Observatory from these outlying lots. Charge for shuttle rides;
- Using the shuttle to build FOTO membership by offering free shuttle trips for FOTO members;
- Restricting parking on Hillhurst, Vermont, Commonwealth and surrounding neighborhoods on a temporary basis. Requiring permits for residents and residents' guests. Lack of on-street parking will encourage Observatory visitors to use outlying parking lots;
- Charging for parking on the Observatory side of the park at least during the first year of the Observatory re-opening, (Note: Arrangements will have to be made for hikers.);
- Offering free parking at the zoo and Western Canyon parking lots, but charging for the shuttle;
- Buying advertising inserts in the LA Times and other local papers that would feature parking information, and also working with the news media to secure strong press coverage about parking options and restrictions;
- Working closely with the Council office to ensure City support.

The LFIA ad hoc committee shared with Dr. Krupp, Ms. Lombardo and Ms. Knack our conviction that a well-run, well-organized re-opening of the Griffith Observatory will be a great opportunity for the City of Los Angeles, FOTO, RAP and the Observatory to project a positive image to the entire Los Angeles community. We asked for an Observatory re-opening that is sensitive to the needs of the Los Feliz and Northeast communities, AND PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZED THAT THE OBSERVATORY RE-OPENING MUST NOT BE CONTEMPLATED DURING THE PERIOD WHEN THE GREEK THEATRE IS IN FULL SWING. We urged them to do whatever is in their power to facilitate an agreement with City departments (police, fire, RAP, DOT) to coordinate on this opening, and immediately take the steps necessary to be sure that the City budgets the funds necessary for these departments to perform their duties effectively.

We mutually agreed that the LFIA ad hoc committee and the Observatory principals would get together later in the year, probably in October 2004, but LFIA was not invited to a subsequent meeting. Some members of our Board received notices of the April 6, 2005 public meeting at Friendship Hall and the LFIA Board was well represented. There were approximately 45 people in attendance, including Vermont Avenue residents whose only notice of the meeting came from the two LFIA Board members who stopped personally at each house of both sides of the street the Sunday beforehand to let owners know that it was taking place,

Linda Barth, RAP General Manager Jon Mukri's Liaison to the Griffith Observatory, opened the meeting and introduced FOTO's Camille Lombardo, who explained that its purpose was to obtain community input on various facets of the re-opening. Consultants that had been hired to

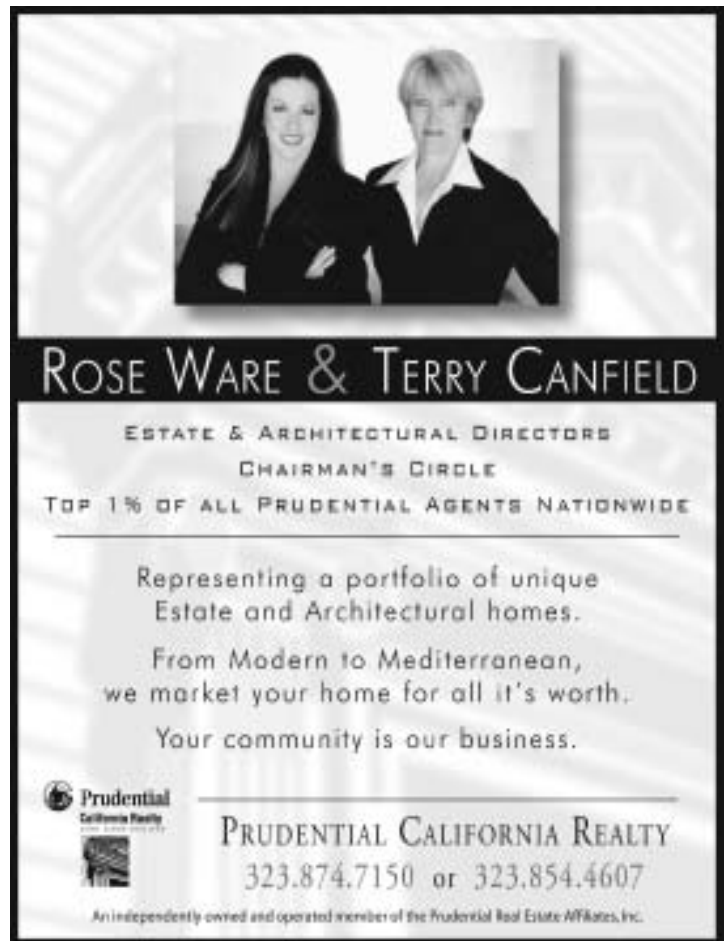
develop the proposed plan were then stationed at four sites in the room to facilitate discussion and record on flip charts the public's suggestions regarding Parking, Shuttle Services, Traffic Concerns and Visitor Handling.

### First Priority: Change the Re-Opening Date

None of the consultants' ideas, no matter how brilliant, have a chance of being effective unless the fundamental scheduling error of the bad re-opening date is corrected. Re-opening the Observatory on Mothers' Day, Sunday May 14, 2006, the very same timeframe in which the Greek Theatre will be launching its 2006 Season, guarantees a traffic meltdown that will dwarf the previous episodes in size and duration. Anyone who lives on or off Los Feliz Blvd. knows that it is a virtual parking lot on Mothers' Day every year. Anyone who lives in the greater Los Feliz area or travels through it as a commuter knows that Greek Theatre concerts—all by themselves—slow nightly traffic to a crawl.

The LFIA is asking the City to either move up the Observatory re-opening to February 2006, or delay it until September 2006 (the anticipated fall re-opening date Observatory leaders discussed with the LFIA ad hoc committee in February 2004). Based on past experience, the City will have its hands full accommodating Observatory visitors without adding another attraction to the mix.


So first things first: let's choose a new re-opening date, one that that will not guarantee chaos and damage for all and give LFIA's suggested solutions a chance to succeed.



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# Autry National Center Commissions Overland Partners Architects to Design New Buildings and Galleries at Los Angeles Campus

**Design will highlight collection of Southwest Museum of the American Indian and expand Center's Research Institute and Library**

**T**he Autry National Center has selected Overland Partners Architects, an award-winning firm based in San Antonio, Texas, to develop a master plan and design new buildings and expanded galleries for the multicultural history center's campus in Griffith Park. The project will physically merge the multiple institutions that have come together in recent years to form the Autry National Center. A large portion of the Autry's expansion will be dedicated to the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, quintupling the gallery space currently devoted to its world-class collection.

Overland Partners was awarded the commission after a focused search for an architectural firm with proven experience in designing museums, working with natural materials, and designing sustainable buildings. Overland's portfolio includes the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas; a seven-phase master plan for the San




Antonio Museum of Art featuring new wings to house the museum's collections of Latin American and Asian art; The Wildlife Experience, an art and conservation museum near Denver; a transit center for Grand Canyon National Park; and a cultural center in Sulphur, Oklahoma, to highlight the heritage of the Chickasaw Indian Nation.

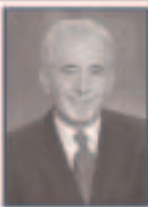
"The architects of Overland Partners understand and celebrate the convergence of diverse cultures that shapes the American West, and can translate that convergence into a design for the Autry National Center that is respectful of the past, enduring for the future, and connected to the earth," said John L. Gray, President and CEO of the Autry National Center.

Overland Partners has been charged with creating a master plan for the Center's 10-acre campus in Griffith Park that incorporates new buildings with the Center's existing facilities, chiefly the Museum of the American West. Opened in 1988, the museum's existing 148,000-sq.-ft. structure along Interstate 5 expresses the California Mission style in a contemporary context.

*(continued on page 16)*

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## Autry Center

(continued from page 15)

Overland will work over the coming months to design an expansion comprising approximately 20,000 sq. ft. of galleries to exhibit and interpret the collection of the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, an arm of the Autry National Center that is currently located about seven miles southeast of the Griffith Park campus in the Mt. Washington area of Los Angeles. An additional 30,000 sq. ft. of underground storage at the Griffith Park campus will securely house the remainder of the Southwest's collection, most of which will be visible to museum visitors.

The Southwest's cramped buildings in Mt. Washington, dating to 1914, have deteriorated to a point that threatens the museum's holdings. Relocating to Griffith Park will result in more than five times the current gallery space to showcase a collection of Native American art and artifacts that is considered one of the largest and most significant in the world. Los Angeles architect Brenda Levin and urban planner Fred Glick are exploring potential future uses of the 12-acre Mt. Washington campus, whose buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In Griffith Park, approximately 50,000 sq. ft. of the Overland-designed master plan will be dedicated to the Institute for the Study of the American West, with large spaces for the Autry Library and the collections of the

Braun Library, which is currently located at the Mt. Washington site. Classrooms, seminar and symposium rooms, and research offices for the Institute's scholars will be included.

A new visitor services center and an expanded museum store and cafe will also be components of the new design. Anticipating growth beyond this first phase, the master plan will include plans for an expansion of the exhibition space and storage for the Museum of the American West. The master plan will be devised to have minimal impact on the Griffith Park campus's lawn and other natural areas.

"These new buildings will help fulfill the Autry's mission to be an accessible, enlightening, inspiring, and nationally respected center of exploration of the American West. Moving the Southwest's art and artifacts to a larger space, with the participation and guidance of the Native American community, will provide a proper home for the extraordinary collection," said Autry National Center Trustee Tally Mingst, who served on the architectural selection committee. "Overland Partners' extensive work for cultural institutions demonstrates their understanding of how architecture can tell multiple stories and offer a variety of experiences to visitors."

Overland will begin work immediately on designs for the Autry National Center, with the goal of presenting a final design to the Autry's Board of Trustees by the end of 2005. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2006.

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# *The 10 Most Endangered Places in Los Feliz*

by Richard Stanley



*Ennis House, 2004*

**C**onservancy groups often maintain “Ten Most Endangered” lists of properties and sites that face unwelcome change or demolition. These lists draw attention to threatened properties so that the affected communities will have time to consider alternative solutions to urgent problems rather than to accept an irreparable loss. The following sites and comments are mine. My hope is that more people will get involved in the decisions that are made every day that concern the “work in progress” that is our much-loved Los Feliz community,

## ***1. Frank Lloyd Wright’s Ennis House –***

Much press has been focussed on the plight of Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1924 masterpiece, the Ennis House, especially since the recent heavy rains further undermined its structural integrity. At last report, it was “yellow-tagged” by the city, meaning that it is uninhabitable and is closed to the public. The scope and cost of repairs to this house, which needs a virtual rebuilding, would certainly rise into the many millions of dollars. One would be hard pressed to find any non-profit organization, let alone the Trust for Preservation of Cultural Heritage (the non-profit that owns the Ennis House) that would have the resources to fund even the most urgently needed repairs. For example, the Trust estimates that about \$5 million is needed to do a two-year seismic stabilization project. To date, they remain \$1.4 million to \$2 million short of this preliminary goal. In the meantime, earthquakes and rains come and go. Already,

people wonder if the Ennis House will fall down—or worse, slide down the hill onto Glendower Avenue.

A few years ago, a well-know actor was interested in buying the house and restoring it. Alas, it was not for sale. Sadly, he bought west of Los Feliz. Wouldn’t it have been better for all concerned, the house and Los Feliz included, if a well-heeled and passionate new owner were to buy the Ennis House and to restore it? In the meantime, one of the most important private structures in Los Feliz risks being no more.

## ***2. Hillhurst Avenue –***

Many people think of Vermont Avenue as the business core of Los Feliz. Actually, Hillhurst Avenue is the address of more Los Feliz businesses, if only because of its greater length. There are also more opportunities on Hillhurst for redevelopment. Actually, there has been a redevelopment trend ongoing for some time. This sort of trend ebbs and flows with economic cycles. The real estate boom of late has made developers take note of commercial sites along Hillhurst. Many sites here are small, some are poorly maintained and/or underused by tenants or owners. Some owners have been approached by developers who would like to buy their properties and adjacent small properties to create new, larger properties more suited to larger scale redevelopment. This idea is not itself bad. The problems lie

*(continued on page 18)*

## Endangered Places

(continued from page 17)

in that the neighborhood has no control over the general direction of large-scale redevelopment in its midst, such as types of businesses attracted to Hillhurst, parking and traffic control, and also that the scale or style of the new buildings might not complement the remaining streetscape.

Residents of Silver Lake are lately reacting to the planned build-out as apartments of a large, vacant, commercial property near the intersection of Hyperion Avenue and Griffith Park Boulevard. Few in the neighborhood knew of the developer's plans until the permit applications were pending. The panic, anger and threatened violence that have surfaced could have been averted by neighborhood involvement in a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) review of the permit applications BEFORE the permit process went too far to turn back or to revise. Los Feliz could learn from the experience of our Silver Lake neighbors and support the creation of our own HPOZ which would allow some measure of local control over redevelopment. Would you rather trust your neighbors to look out for the interests of the neighborhood or trust developers (usually from out of the area) to call the shots?

## 3. The street trees in the Vermont business district –

There is a battle ongoing along the Vermont Avenue business district. Put simply, here is the dispute: the ficus trees planted as street trees are not valued by the business owners. They are too big and bushy to allow the business signage to be seen well. The tree roots wreak havoc with the sidewalks (a few years ago, one former LFIA board member was seriously injured when he tripped over a sidewalk heaved up by a ficus tree along Vermont). The trees are dull: they neither afford seasonal color nor any sort of aesthetic variation. They drop messy fruit—the figs. They require constant pruning to look good. Their smooth bark invites graffiti. And finally, some business owners butcher the trees or just remove them altogether. As a consequence, Vermont looks ragged—an arboreal war zone.

Nothing complements a street, even the lowliest, like a uniform planting of attractive, well-maintained street trees. In the right setting ficus trees can function well as street trees (look at Vermont Avenue above Los Feliz Boulevard where the Moreton Bay figs have room to spread). The Los Feliz Business Improvement District (BID) should have one last battle with these trees—and take no prisoners. Cut them ALL down and replace them with appropriate trees (as the city of Glendale did with their mis-planted ficus trees along Brand Boulevard). Many trees would be far better looking and less of a



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problem than these. A columnar ginkgo, for example, that doesn't spread or drop fruit—but changes a brilliant yellow around Thanksgiving—might work well, but there are many others, too. In a few years, Vermont could be a showplace of harmony among trees and people. Remember: an attractive street draws business.

#### **4. Laughlin Park –**

ALL of Los Feliz deserves the local protection of an HPOZ, but if there were one micro-neighborhood that could function as the proverbial canary in the coal mine, it would be Laughlin Park. “The Park” as it is known to residents, is about 70 homes that lie mostly within the white gates seen south of the Los Feliz Estates. Here, many Hollywood celebrities of the Golden Era resided in classic villas. Later, homes of all styles filled the remaining lots. Almost every house seems to have a story attached to it.

Today, there are virtually no vacant lots. The pressure to build “McMansions” on some of the toniest streets in the area is ever-present. One-by-one, a house here or there has been replaced by a huge stucco box. Older residents complain that their views are lost. Though many of the older homes have been handsomely remodeled, there are no guidelines as to what can be done to even the most esteemed landmark. None of the crown jewels in Laughlin Park, such as the C.B. DeMille, Charlie Chaplin, W.C. Fields, Lily Pons, Jack Dempsey or Deanna Durbin houses, has been lost—yet, but anything could happen.

#### **5. Griffith Park –**

And speaking of crown jewels, Griffith Park, is certainly one of the best the city has to offer. That it looks as good as it does, despite the weekly flood of visitors, is astonishing. Los Feliz benefits mightily from the park, its next-door neighbor. But, there is peril here as well—not so much from the traffic, Greek Theatre or otherwise, but from fire. If

there were ever a fire similar to the Oakland fire of not that long ago, Los Feliz as we know it would cease to exist. One has only to drive from the older parts of the Oakland hills to the newer areas that replaced the burned-out areas with their 1910-era Craftsman or revival style houses, some built by Julia Morgan of Hearst Castle fame, to mourn the palpable loss. One emerges from a cozy, tree-lined neighborhood to a stark tract devoid of “place.” What Alice B. Toklas said of the Oakland of yore, applies surely now to the new parts of Oakland: “There’s no ‘there’ there.”

A few years ago, thanks in part to the efforts of the LFIA, Griffith Park’s fire suppression and prevention plans were reviewed and improvements were made to water mains, tanks and hydrants. These efforts need to be continued—*indefinitely*. Emergency vehicle access to the park needs to be planned better in light of the ever-increasing gridlock surrounding the park. No smoking rules in the park need to be enforced better. Even in the driest times of the year, park visitors may be observed casually dropping cigarettes from cars. Few are ticketed by the rare Ranger who happens to pass by. We need more rangers on duty—especially on days of high park visitation. In a catastrophic fire, Los Feliz will be lost forever.

#### **6. Barnsdall Park and the “Hollyhock House” –**

Frank Lloyd Wright’s famed “Hollyhock House,” built c. 1921 for oil heiress Aline Barnsdall remains a work in progress, despite the city’s having spent \$16 million on Phase 1 of the restoration and being years behind schedule. Suffering from neglect, inappropriate modifications and the effects of damaging earthquakes and water intrusion, the house will take several more phases of restoration, millions more in dollars and many more years before the restoration will be completed. Phase 2 is estimated to cost \$470,000, but the scope of the work is still being determined. In the

*(continued on page 20)*



### ***Tree Planted in Memory of Former Board Member Pat Moore***

**T**he LFIA Beautification Committee planted a deodar cedar on Los Feliz Boulevard in memory of long-time Board member Pat Moore who passed away last year. Family members, LFIA members and friends from the Oaks gathered on April 12 to honor him and to dedicate the tree. Pat was always active in keeping Los Feliz beautiful whether by picking up trash, decorating the holiday tree, or watering the deodars. Pat’s grandson recalled helping Pops carry buckets of water to a newly planted deodar on Los Feliz when he was a little boy. To this day he thinks of it as his tree.

Many of you will remember the fascinating presentation Pat and his brother Micky made at a 1999 general meeting at the Autry Museum on life as child actors with Cecile B. De Mille. After years in front of the camera in silent films, both enjoyed long careers behind the camera. Micky spoke at the dedication. You’ll notice that he’s still making pictures!

*Micky Moore at dedication of tree  
planted in memory of his brother, Pat.*

## Endangered Places

(continued from page 19)

meantime, plastic tarps will be used to stop roof leaks during a future rainy season. Phase 3 will cost about \$5 million to perform seismic retrofitting to both the main house and a guest house. A final Phase 4 will cost millions more to do the cosmetic repairs needed to complete the restoration. Some money is to come from a bond issue to be used to restore earthquake-damaged buildings. Much of the money has yet to be found.

What all this means is that the fate of the Hollyhock House is far from certain. The vagaries of city funding, planning and administration coupled with the challenges of future earthquakes and rains will necessitate citizen watchfulness into the indefinite future. This is one public works project that cannot be left on auto-pilot.

### 7. Visible Los Feliz –

In Realtor parlance, houses in Los Feliz are known for their great “curb appeal.” It’s the elegant way they look as a person walks or drives by. It’s our homes’ and Los Feliz’s first impression.

Sadly, more and more Los Feliz homes are going incognito when it comes to curb appeal. First hedges, then fences, finally walls hide more and more of what used to be

a fine old neighborhood. Code enforcement as pertaining to walls and fences is spotty in Los Feliz. The LFIA has responded to some of the more egregious examples of code violations, but many homes are already hidden—or seemingly imprisoned behind high iron fences, many of them illegal. We need better code enforcement. Do we really want to hide the “face” of Los Feliz behind walls?

### 8. The sidewalks and curbs of Los Feliz –

And about that curb appeal: sidewalks and curbs in Los Feliz continue to vanish, not to thieves or vandals, but just plain old wear and tear. At the rate that the curbs and sidewalks erode, I may yet live to wake up and see Los Feliz Boulevard returned to the country lane it was in the rancho days. The rains of ‘05 have hastened the demise of our simplest and most basic street furniture: curbs and sidewalks. When will the city return to doing what well-run cities do—and get the property owners to maintain the curbs and sidewalks for which they are responsible?

### 9. Multi-family housing in Los Feliz –

Many fine old apartments are in serious jeopardy. Most are more than 50 years old. Many date to the early 1920s. By now, these buildings need major repairs to their infrastructures. Systems like plumbing, electrical and foundations need replacement or major upgrading. Further, most apartment buildings rarely get fumigated for

The advertisement is split into two main sections. On the left is a book cover for "los angeles transformed" by Tom Sitton, subtitled "Fletcher Bowron's Urban Reform Revival, 1938-1953". The cover features a large black and white photograph of the Los Angeles City Hall tower. Below the main title are three smaller images: a classical statue, a group of people, and a pair of glasses. On the right is an advertisement for Skylight Books. The text reads "Your neighborhood bookstore has books about your neighborhood." Below this is the store's name "SKYLIGHT Books" in a stylized font. At the bottom right, the address "1818 N. Vermont Ave. (between Hollywood Blvd. & Franklin Ave.)" is listed, along with phone and fax numbers, the website "www.skylightbooks.com", an email address "skylightbook@earthlink.net", and hours "10am - 10pm daily". The background of the right section shows a blurred storefront with a sign that says "EPIC AUDITORIUM".

termites—or have wood repairs made. Is it any wonder that one apartment inexplicably collapsed in Echo Park a few years ago?

Given that almost all older apartment buildings are subject to rent control and that many tenants pay below-market rents, most landlords are disinclined to put money into their buildings. Drive through some areas where apartments have been converted to condominiums. The level of pride of ownership of the condos is palpable. The neglect of the grand, old apartments is sad.

Why is this so? The city maintains an inappropriately high standard for the conversion of apartments to condos. Parking requirements are greater for condos than for apartments, for example. Thus, many apartments are effectively kept from ever being converted to condos.

If more condos were available for purchase (an urgent need in Los Angeles right now), more first-time buyers would be able to get a toe hold in the real estate market and take advantage of the tax benefits and potential for equity appreciation. The cost of local housing is artificially inflated by the lack of entry-level, affordable housing available for purchase. Many renters escape the city to distant outlying areas, buy houses there and commute back into the city, thus adding to traffic congestion and pollution.

Wouldn't it be better to keep residents who care about the city and who work in the city living here in the city? Wouldn't it be better to allow residents to purchase modest,

affordable, apartment condos to get a start in home ownership? Paying rent is without long term benefit to anyone. Home ownership is the best bet for long-term financial stability for both residents and the city. The city needs to revise its out-dated regulations regarding apartment conversions.

### 10. Corner monuments –

Prestige formerly attached to corner lots. Today, residential property does not benefit from a corner location as it once did, but a corner location is everything to a commercial property owner. Los Feliz is like a small town: there are only so many prime corner commercial lots. As Los Feliz is also an OLDER small town, these corner lots are usually occupied by properties that have often become local landmarks of a sort.

Developers are not in the business of preserving local landmarks. If they were, they would be called “preservers” not developers. Lately, developers have noted the rising real estate prices in Los Feliz and concluded that the highest and best use of some of our prime corners is to change the status quo. There are several prime corner lots, some with key landmarks that are in the cross-hairs of developers. Look for changes to places like the Derby/Louise’s Tratoria corner, for example. Again, the sole way that a neighborhood can have some control over the process of redevelopment is to implement an HPOZ. Time is running out for some of these prime corner properties.



# DRESDEN

## Restaurant

“A Los Feliz tradition for over 50 years”

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**Lunch ♦ Dinner**

**Monday–Saturday, open 11 a.m. Daily**  
**Sunday (Dinner only) open 4 p.m.**  
**Continental and American Cuisine**  
**Famous for “Certified Angus Beef”**

**Marty & Elayne in our Lounge, Monday through Saturday**

**1760 N. Vermont Avenue • 323.665.4294**  
 Valet Parking in Rear

**Having a Birthday?**  
 Your Lunch or Dinner  
 Will Be Complimentary  
 the Month of Your Birthday  
 With Your Party of 4 or More!

(Tax, Tip and Beverage not included, I.D. Required — Subject to change)

## Immaculate Heart High School


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A Private Catholic College Preparatory School  
for Young Women • Grades 9–12

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**Open House for Prospective Students**  
*Sunday, December 5th, at 1:00 p.m.*

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- ❖ Directed by the Immaculate Heart Community and lay associates
- ❖ Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the California Association of Independent Schools
- ❖ Located in the Los Feliz Hills since 1906

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## Immaculate Heart Middle School

for girls, Grades 6, 7 and 8

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**Open House for Prospective Students**  
*Sunday, December 12th, at 1:00 p.m.*

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5515 Franklin Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90028  
 (323) 461-3651 • [www.immaculateheart.org](http://www.immaculateheart.org)

## Do You Have Old Photos to Share?

**D**o you have old photos of people and places in Los Feliz that you would like to donate or loan to the LFIA History Committee to preserve and share memories for future generations? If so you may send your photos to LFIA History Committee, 2648 N. Commonwealth Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90027. Or you may call Melissa Linn at her office (818 409-102) to make arrangements for LFIA to copy your photos.



*John Marshall High School class officers for the spring of 1933, standing on front steps of the school on Tracy Street in Los Feliz. They are wearing their bright yellow senior sweaters. The collegiate gothic-style building opened its doors in 1931. This photo is part of the LFIA Archives. (Photo courtesy of John Stevenson, Class of '33.)*

*Let It Snow In Los Feliz: It's a rare occurrence, but snowflakes fell in Los Feliz in the mid-1940s. In this photo, Leona Monteleone and Marjorie Monteleone Romer admire the snow in their yard in the 1900 block of Berendo Street. And note: Marjorie's wearing her PJs under her coat. This photo is part of the LFIA Archives. (Photo courtesy of Marjorie Romer.)*



## La Belle Epoque

**Your neighborhood bistro is now serving  
Breakfast, lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch  
wrapped in the warmth of its new ambiance.**



Relax and enjoy in the European tradition, where Los Feliz Village meets Griffith Park.

**2128 Hillhurst Avenue, Los Angeles 90027 • Reservations (323) 669-7640**

*Bring in this ad for a free dessert with dinner entree. Offer expires July 31, 2005.*

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# Los Feliz Pottery Becomes Pot-*ted*

by Bob Fouyer

**L**ong-time local business Los Feliz Pottery at 3158 Los Feliz Boulevard has been sold. Its new name is POT-TED.

The business has a long history in the Atwater/Los Feliz area. Fifty years ago Vestal A. Sliger drove to Los Angeles from Detroit with his wife Ruby, and traded their car for the funds to start the business. He began on the corner in an empty lot but, after a couple of years, purchased a small plot of land a few hundred yards up the street and built a new store. A few years later he acquired the building next door, which at the time was an antique store. This is where the business stands today.

Sliger ran the business until about seven years ago but sold the business to Richard Palko when he could no longer handle the heavy merchandise. He is now 92 years old and still owns the property. Palko recently sold the business to the new owner, Annette Gutierrez, a former screen writer who tired of the movie business and decided to try something new. Her partner, Mary Gray, a set decorator, originally began experimenting with laying tile into concrete pavers after looking everywhere and not finding any. Their husbands thought they were crazy—what were a couple of middle-aged gals doing with concrete? But they persisted and pretty soon had some nice samples to sell. Later they got into making tile



tables. One day they were at the Los Feliz Animal Hospital and decided to amble next door to Los Feliz Pottery and see if the owner would be interested in buying their pavers.

They fell in love with the store and asked the owner if he would consider selling. Coincidentally, he was in the process of placing an ad to sell the business. They figured it was meant to be.

The new owners have been re-vamping the entire store and designing some of their own fountains and having some very modern planters made out of concrete. “We love Asian pots and antique iron, and are in the process of bringing out a line of wrought-iron furniture. Our line is *Gifts for the Garden*, and we like to think of ourselves as exterior decorators,” said Gutierrez.

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## In Memoriam

**C**arl Ferraro, 91, owner of Dresden Restaurant for over 50 years, died January 20 at the Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank. The cause of death was reportedly congestive heart failure.

The Dresden became a neighborhood fixture over the years, and has been used as a location for a number of popular Hollywood films such as “What Women Want,” (2000), with Mel Gibson and “The Two Jakes,” (1990), with Jack Nicholson. Nothing, however, had more of an impact on Ferraro’s business than “Swingers,” (1996). The Dresden name was used in the film and Ferraro had a cameo role. Also the jazz duo, Marty and Elayne Roberts, who have performed in the piano bar for more than 20 years, also appeared in the film.

Ferraro purchased the Dresden in 1954 and kept the name, even though it referred to the China dolls that were part of the previous owner’s décor. He remodeled it in 1963, adding white leatherette booths, Venetian chandeliers and a wood-beam ceiling.

Ferraro was born in Ashland, Wisconsin and was the youngest of four children. He lived with his grandparents in Michigan after his parents died during a flu epidemic when he was four. He married Sara Fioretto and together they moved to Los Angeles in 1951. Three years later he bought the restaurant.

Anyone who has ever been to the Dresden will always remember Ferraro, who dressed in a tailored suit and greeted customers at the door. He made everyone feel welcome and special.

Ferraro is survived by his wife, sons James, Douglas and Carl, and one grandson, Mark.



# Los Feliz Observer

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*Griffith Observatory, currently under construction, is scheduled to reopen in May 2006. See story on page 1.*