

Los Feliz Observer

LOS FELIZ IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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

Spring 2002

This is Our Annual Membership Issue. Please Support Your Neighborhood Association by Joining or Renewing Your Membership Today.

See Page 9. Also See Our Website www.LFIA.com

GGPNC—We're On Our Way

by Cameron Flanagan

On February 12, 2002, over a year and a half since the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) began its formation efforts, the GGPNC by-laws were ratified by a group of over 30 stakeholders. It was a tremendous night for GGPNC organizers and their faithful moderator, Mark Siegel, who ensured people were empowered to provide final input to the By-laws, which will provide a structure to the GGPNC.

On March 8, the members of the GGPNC Steering Committee, including LFIA's own Mark Siegel, submitted the certification application with the organizational by-laws and proof of outreach efforts to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE). The joy of this momentous occasion cannot be understated! Councilman Tom LaBonge also attended the historic event.

Yet, submitting these materials is only the beginning. The effort to outreach to the community will continue and the GGPNC will endeavor to meet regularly to discuss issues of local importance and form committees to accomplish the tasks of improving the quality of life for all stakeholders in Los Feliz, Franklin Hills and Griffith Park.

If you want to help the community in which you live, work or have an interest, come join the community at our next GGPNC meeting in the Los Feliz Community Police Center (Cal Fed Bank Building), located at 1965 Hillhurst Avenue. The GGPNC would love for you to attend. Future dates for the year 2002 are as follows: May 20, June 17, July 15, August 19, September 17, October 21, November 18 and December 16.



Members of GGPNC Steering Committee submit certification application to Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE). Pictured l to r are: Councilman Tom LaBonge and Committee members Cameron Flanagan, Charley Mims, Mary Rodriguez, Juliet Kiperman, Ricardo Gomez, Dora Herrera, Dennis Chew, Rosemary DeMonte and Mark Siegel.

Crime Ridden Motel on Sunset Will Finally Close

by Mary Rodriguez



Infamous Sunset Pacific Motel finally closed after years of creating havoc for the community.

On March 13, 2002, I had a successful, productive, and unbelievable kind of a morning. My neighbor and I left at 8:30 a.m. and headed down to City Hall for two hearings that greatly affected Thomas Starr King Middle School, which our children attend. My friend Terri had never been to City Hall and was looking forward to a very educational experience, and I believe she got one.

The LA City Council was hearing the appeal of Edward J. and Frances Eng, owners of the Sunset Pacific Motel at 4301 Sunset Blvd., on the corner of Sunset Blvd. and Bates Ave.,

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Crime Ridden Motel on Sunset Will Finally Close

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which is why it is also known as the “Bates Motel.” Community members have been complaining about this establishment for twenty years. The LAPD calls it one of the most dangerous properties in the city. It is a haven for prostitution, and complaints range from loitering, drug dealing,



Councilmembers Tom LaBonge and Eric Garcetti attended community meeting giving their support for closing the Sunset Pacific Motel.

loud noises, spousal abuse, failure to maintain a proper motel register, controlled substances, gang activity, shootings, and the removal of three dead bodies. All of this within 400 ft. of the middle school and right across the street from the Los Feliz-Silver Lake Jewish Community Center.

Last December I attended a Neighborhood Watch meeting near ABC Studios on Prospect Ave. LAPD Senior Lead Officers Al Polehonki and Sam Salazar handed out a LAPD map called a “F.A.S.T.R.A.C.” It is a monthly report of crime LAPD uses to identify crime trends in the Northeast Division. When we looked at the map it immediately became clear to us that the corner of Fountain Ave. and Sunset Blvd. was a hotbed of criminal activity, and crime was emanating from this one location throughout our entire community. Right then we decided to hold an informative community meeting and invite both Councilmembers, Tom LaBonge and Eric Garcetti, and solicit their support to shut it down.

Meanwhile, on January 3, Chief Zoning Administrator Nicholas Brown ruled because the past and present operation



Thomas Starr King Middle School in the background.



Standing-room-only attendance at community meeting at Thomas Starr King to discuss the Sunset Pacific Motel and crime in the area.

of the Sunset Pacific Motel had continued to adversely affect the health, peace and safety of persons in the surrounding area: **“I hereby require the discontinuance of the motel use effective immediately.”** The following week Mr. & Mrs. Eng filed an appeal, which meant the motel would remain open during the entire appeal process, much to the community’s dismay.

So on January 29, a very windy winter evening, approximately 350 people attended a community meeting at Thomas Starr King Middle School to discuss the Sunset Pacific Motel and crime in the area. Much to my surprise, many people had already made the connection between crime in the neighborhood and the “Bates Motel.” Business

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Everyday children walk to school through this area.



Entrance to stairway tunnel and chainlink cage above.

Spring 2002

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Editor: Robert Fouyer

Editorial Associates: Charlotte DeArmond, Richard Stanley, Mary Rodriguez, Patti Ruben, Cheryl Johnson, Diane Kanner and Mark Siegel

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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President's Commentary

By Terry Hughes

We have now passed the six month mark since the terrorist attacks of last year. While none of us is ever likely to forget those tragedies, we have, nonetheless, moved forward with our lives. We have had another election this past March 5 and, I must say, I was disappointed with the voter turnout. I would have thought that in the first election since September 11, a greater percentage of our registered voters would have turned out, and yet we had record low voter participation.

Many commentators believe that a low voter turnout reflects voter contentment and that we should not be alarmed; however, I believe voter apathy is more likely the cause and I do not believe it is healthy or that it bodes well for our democracy. The good news, if one can say that it is good, is that those of us who do vote have a greater say in what happens than we would if everyone else voted. And yet, much as I trust the free market to deliver us a strong and vibrant economy I would prefer to trust our democracy to the majority and not a minority of voters.

On a more positive note, our Board has decided that we should try to enter more boldly into the new millennium and make better use of its wonderful technologies. As many of you know, LFIA has had a website for some time at www.lfia.com. I am told, however, that we are not taking full advantage of the many communication possibilities that it could make available to us.

Our membership solicitation that you recently received asks for an e-mail address from those of you who have e-mail and are willing to provide us your address. As an example of the possibilities an e-mail system may provide to our members, Mary Rodriguez and John Ortega, our Police Committee Co-Chairs, have been investigating ways of getting more timely communications from our police department, with the objective that relevant information could be provided quickly by e-mail to those of our members who would like this information. The Franklin Hills Residents Association has such a system in place, and I understand that it was instrumental recently in helping the police to apprehend a suspect for whom they had been searching.

In addition, groups of our members have indicated an interest in participating in zoning or beautification matters or some of our other committee activities. It would be easy to enhance communication if we could notify these individuals by e-mail of upcoming participation opportunities. We do not know yet how much interest LFIA members will have in this proposal for improving communication nor do we know how effective our board will be in utilizing the new technological possibilities. We believe, however, that it is an exciting opportunity for us to try and that we should be able to do so at very little cost.

I hope you all enjoy the approaching spring season and to those of you who are celebrating these holidays, have an enjoyable Easter and Passover.



Notes from the Chair

by Charlotte De Armond

The 2002 annual preopening meeting hosted by the Nederlander organization for the Los Feliz neighborhood has been scheduled for Thursday, April 25, at 6 p.m. at the Greek Theatre. General Manager Mike Garcia will be discussing the upcoming season and has assured me that he will be happy to answer any questions raised by Greek Theatre neighbors. Recreation and Parks senior staff will also be available on the 25th to answer questions. I urge you to attend, particularly those of you whose homes and lives are directly affected on concert nights at the Greek.

My letter to LFIA members written for the winter issue of the Observer reported that the City's long, arduous controversy over who would operate the Greek Theatre after the Nederlander organization's 27-year reign had finally ended. Nederlander-Greek, Inc., would continue to be the concessionaire for another 10 years, following approval by a majority of the "new" Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners on November 7 of the draft agreement worked out by staff and Nederlander.

What I wrote then was accurate but, as this issue of the Observer goes to press, the City of Los Angeles and Nederlander still do not have a contract. We do know that the Board of Commissioners considered additional refinements to the agreement at their February 20 meeting. Language has been inserted that assures Nederlander fair consideration of requests for prorated rent or penalty waivers in the event that circumstances of September 11, or of 2002-2003 construction, have documented negative financial impacts on the respective seasons. The Board also agreed that the stage roof improvements and related work can now wait until the 2003-2004 off-season, while the bulk of the capital improvements are still expected to be done in 2002-2003.

Nederlander representatives have indicated their satisfaction with the amended agreement that was approved by the Board of Commissioners, but it still requires approval by the Mayor and the City Council before the contract can be executed. We learned at the March 7 meeting of the Greek Theatre Advisory Committee that Nederlander General Manager Mike Garcia has moved ahead and tentatively scheduled the Greek to open May 10, with George Clinton headlining a '70s Funk Concert, to be followed the next night by the Jarvis Clay Christian Rock Group. Even if the contract has not been signed by then, it would appear that the City has no option but to authorize the Nederlanders to proceed under some form of interim agreement. The City would have no other option except to close the Greek for the 2002 season, which seems highly unlikely.

Mike tells me that he and his wife have recently purchased a home in Los Feliz and plan to become members of LFIA. We welcome the Garcias to the neighborhood and urge them to become active in our community.

I look forward to seeing and talking with you at the April 25 meeting.



Your Los Feliz Improvement Association in Action

The Los Feliz Improvement Association is “committee driven” and its strength lies in these dedicated volunteers who help identify and solve community problems. Committee chairs, who are all members of the LFIA board, report on what they have been working on in the past year and what they hope to accomplish in 2002.

Parks Committee **Chuck Soter, Chair**

The Parks Committee’s focus remains the protection and preservation of Griffith Park. As LFIA believes that what affects other parks also impacts Griffith Park, we do not limit our efforts to Griffith Park alone, but have been involved with city-wide concerns when appropriate. While we emphasize protection and preservation, we also realize that Griffith Park serves a broad range of people, and we strive to ensure the Park’s accessibility to all citizens of our great metropolis.

This year, we have been closely involved with many Park issues, including:

- The upgrade and reconfiguration of the Los Angeles Zoo entrance and parking lot, with the addition of the new water conservation/demonstration area.
- The renovation and new construction at the Griffith Observatory
- The new Greek Theatre operating contract and its effect on Los Feliz as well as greater Los Angeles (an LFIA Board member continues to serve on GTAC).
- The allocation of Proposition K and Proposition 12 funds for local parks and youth facilities (an LFIA Board member serves as Council District 4’s representative on the Regional Volunteer Neighborhood Oversight Committee).
- The enforcement of City statutes relating to Los Angeles City parks and park trails, to assure that all users can continue to safely enjoy these resources

Additionally, we have registered our opposition to the proposal to use the Los Angeles Equestrian Center as a “multi-purpose” entertainment facility that would add a large number of public and private non-equestrian events to its yearly schedule.

Regarding enforcement, LFIA expresses its appreciation to the understaffed Los Angeles City Park Rangers who maintain order under trying circumstances. Also, thank you to Recreation and Parks staff for their continued beautification efforts at the major Park entrances.

We invite your time, input and insights relating to the above matters, or to any other concerns you may have about local parks. Feel free to contact us at any time.



Chuck Soter

History Committee **Marian Dodge, Chair**

The goal of the History Committee is to develop an appreciation and awareness of the history of Los Feliz, and to help preserve those qualities which give it its unique character. To that end the Los Feliz Improvement Association Historical Survey is now available for you to use at the Los Feliz Library reference desk. The survey is the result of ten years of research and effort by the History Committee. It documents building permit information on approximately 2,700 buildings in Los Feliz, with information such as original owner, architect, contractor and interesting tidbits about the owners. It’s a great way to begin your research if you wish to nominate your home for city landmark designation, and Los Feliz has many homes that would qualify for that honor.



Marian Dodge

The second edition of the award-winning book *The History of the Los Feliz Improvement Association* came off the press last year. Full of historic photos and maps, it is a must read for those interested in the growth and development of Los Feliz. The book has been featured on KCET’s *Life and Times* as well as at book panels at Skylight Books, Dawson’s Book Store, and the Los Feliz Library. The book is being offered to LFIA members at special discounted rates when they join or renew their membership in 2002. Use the membership reply envelope included in this newsletter to order your copy.

Schools Committee **Mary Rodriguez, Schools Chair**

Every public school throughout the city is in need of support and assistance from their surrounding community. It is crucial to the schools’ success as an institution of education and equally important to the neighborhood for an improved quality of life. Yet working with the LA Unified School District can be an overwhelming challenge. It is an inundating bureaucracy, but the rewards of succeeding and touching the lives of so many children makes it worthwhile.



Mary Rodriguez

The Los Feliz Improvement Association recognizes the importance of investing in our local schools and is committed to improving and participating in a variety of ways. The school year for 2001–2002 has brought many positive changes to our neighborhood. The opening of the new Gifted/High Ability Technology/Arts Magnet School for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at Thomas Starr King Middle School is one of our most successful accomplishments.

Last May, King received the LA Conservancy Preservation Award for 2001 for the restoration of the historic 1936 WPA

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Your Los Feliz Improvement Association in Action

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statue entitled *The Vanishing Race*, which sits in their newly designed courtyard. LFIA collaborated with Franklin Hills Residents Association and received many grants in order to complete this project. In April, a wrought iron fence designed by a local artist will be installed to protect our treasured statue for generations to come.

This year Thomas Starr King Middle School celebrates its 75th anniversary. On April 26, King alumni will speak to the student body about their days at King and their careers. If you are a King alumni interested in participating, please call the school at (323) 664-1176. On Saturday, April 27, King will host a community event inviting the neighborhood to visit the much-improved campus and share in their celebration.

Last year John Marshall High School celebrated its 70th anniversary, and the City of LA commemorated it by installing a historic designation sign at the front of the school. Marshall continues to be a successful example of student and community involvement. It is the only high school in the city requiring 20 hours of community service in order to graduate. Marshall students and LFIA members meet once a month to beautify the streets of Los Feliz. LFIA also continues to support the award-winning JMHS Marching Band, which is always in need of instruments and grateful for donations.

Franklin Avenue Elementary was recipient of the 'City of Angels Award' from the Getty House Foundation, receiving \$5,000 for excellence in parent participation. This is an amazing accomplishment for any public school. LFIA assisted parents in writing a city grant application that gave them the money to re-landscape the front of the school, and LFIA will continue to assist their efforts by supplementing with plants as needed. The beginning of the school year is always hectic, but this one was especially difficult as we challenged LAUSD administration not to reassign Principal Dr. Verna Dauterive to another school. Those of us that have had our children attend Franklin Ave. Elementary know that Dr. Dauterive is a cornerstone of strength and stability. She has kept our school the gem that it is through endless budget cuts and bureaucratic changes. Finally, at the end of the first week of school and after numerous letters, phone calls, and meetings, the decision was made to allow Dr. Dauterive to stay — a true victory for the neighborhood.

LFIA continues to support Franklin Ave. Elementary FAME (Fun Activities in Math and Science Exploratorium) Family Night, a unique, fun, and educational evening for parents, children, and the entire community. The school committee encourages any LFIA member that is interested in volunteering their time to our young people, to call us and join us for our next school committee event (323-660-1914).

A Very Sad Note

On March 2, Dr. Thelma Yoshii, the former Principal at Thomas Starr King passed away. She served over 40 years as

an educator for LAUSD. For the last five years, Thelma helped to reform King and empowered members of LFIA and many others to make necessary changes so that King students could succeed. She was instrumental in bringing about the new magnet school. Thelma loved middle school children and understood their immense changes and needs as they entered adolescence. Those of us fortunate enough to have known her will miss her wisdom, her smile, and her calming presence.

Police, Fire and Emergency Planning Committee John Ortega, Chair

The 2001 Thanksgiving dinner for the police was a tremendous success. Thank to everyone involved for your support and help in making the event festive and memorable.

The Police Committee would like to thank the tireless efforts of committee member and former chair, Sharon Grigsby, who still represents LFIA as a member of the Community Police Advisory Board working with Northeast Division Commander Captain Kyle Jackson. Sharon shares my concerns about the ever-increasing complexity of dealing with crime problems in our area.

My committee and LFIA are faced with many new challenges in 2002. I wish I could give members words of encouragement and paint a rosy picture, but I can't. Violent crime is increasing and LAPD forces are down 1,200 officers citywide. Traffic is getting worse and no relief is in sight. Twenty years ago, Chief Gates speaking about combating crime put it best when he said, "... We are doing the best we can, and that is lousy..." The current president of the Police Commission recently stated "... we're in a sinking boat and the water is rising, and we only have a little cup to keep bailing..."

A truth in life is that we as a community, like all other communities, must organize together with LAPD and take full advantage of the technology available to us to fight crime in our neighborhoods. An E-mail Notification System that includes a Neighborhood Crime Alert Hotline may be the community policing of the future. Beginning new and reviving old Neighborhood Watch programs throughout our community can be key to disseminating important information. Our committee is exploring ways to share information on crime trends, potential predators, and safety issues with LFIA members and LAPD.

Tentative plans are to have a computer, fax and copy machine at the Los Feliz Community Police Center. We are exploring the ability to e-mail members and disseminate information regarding crime or upcoming events. Members can in turn provide us with information about what is happening in their own communities. There are points of concern that still need to be addressed, including how to prevent duplication of efforts, protection of our members e-mail addresses and privacy, and securing the safety of LFIA equipment.



John Ortega

We are just in the beginning phase of exploration and research, and we will keep our members informed as we progress. I welcome suggestions to assist us all in taking back our streets from the criminal element. You can reach me at (323) 913-2442 or e-mail me at JMO0529@CS.com.

Streets, Traffic, Parking & Lighting Committee *Richard Stanley, Chair*

The Mobility Action Committee (MAC) met in early February. Our local traffic planner, Brian Gallagher, gave us his usual insightful update on the progress of his department in the Los Feliz community. A few highlights:



Richard Stanley

- All-way stop signs will be installed at Cromwell and Amesbury.
- A petition to make Lambeth one-way so as to discourage short-cutting was defeated by local residents.
- Speed humps will be installed on Griffith Park Blvd. north of Los Feliz.
- A stop sign will be installed at Holboro Dr. and Griffith Park Blvd.
- Cromwell will not get speed humps — the street is too narrow and curvy to meet design criteria; stop signs may be installed instead.
- A stop sign has been installed at Normandie and Ambrose.
- A stop sign may be installed at Talmadge and Clarissa, and also at Vermont at the gate to Griffith Park.
- The intersection at Rowena and Hyperion will be redesigned to accommodate a second westbound left turn lane.
- Street signs will be installed at Crystal Spring Dr. and Los Feliz.
- No U-turn signs were installed at the I-5 ramps and Los Feliz Blvd. Intersection.
- Diagonal parking will be installed on Winona south of Franklin and along Franklin between Western and Normandie; all parking on the north side of Franklin will be eliminated, along with one eastbound lane in an effort to provide more parking for tenants and to calm traffic on Franklin.
- A new stop sign has been installed at Ambrose and Edgemont.
- The light at Finley and Hillhurst will be installed in combination with stop signs along Finley.

Several residents of the Franklin Square area south of Los Feliz Boulevard and west of Vermont Avenue attended the MAC meeting to support the idea of no left turns from westbound Los Feliz to southbound Berendo. They reported that many speed-related accidents have happened lately during rush hours.

Also discussed was the idea of charging a parking fee to visitors who drive to Griffith Park on weekends, in an effort to encourage car-pooling and the use of public transportation. Another idea discussed again was to downgrade some local streets from “secondary highways” to “collector” status so that more stop signs can be installed. Secondary highways usually do not have stop signs. Examples of secondary highways in Los Feliz would be Los Feliz Boulevard and Franklin Avenue.

Have some feedback? Email me at rstanley@richard-stanleyrealtor.com; I will pass on your suggestions to Brian Gallagher and Councilman LaBonge—and bring them up at upcoming MAC meetings.

Zoning Committee *Juliet Kiperman, Chair*



Juliet Kiperman

The quality of your life and the value of your property are dramatically impacted by the land-use decisions of your neighbors, developers and businesses in your community. The Zoning Committee has worked diligently this past year to ensure the preservation and protection of our beautiful community while attempting to avoid obstructionism. A few of our successes are as follow:

Convincing a Texas based developer who builds large senior assisted-care living facilities not to purchase the vacant lot on the north/west corner of Los Feliz Blvd. and Vermont Avenue, while supporting another local developer in building 3 single-family residences instead. The property is currently in escrow and ground-breaking is imminent.

Scaling back illegal, over-height fences on Franklin, Cromwell and Edgemont Avenues. Halting the construction-in-progress of illegal fences and walls until proper permits were obtained.

Helping to close an illegally operated nightclub in the business district where shootings and gang fights regularly disturbed the community.

Working with L.A. Dept. of Building and Safety in successfully eliminating illegal use of R-1 properties as multi-family dwellings and home businesses on many Los Feliz streets.

Eliminating three illegal, off-site signs on Hillhurst Ave. (It's a start).

Cleaning up nuisance properties that blighted many neighborhoods.

This “watchdog” committee made numerous presentations at Zoning hearings, City Council and commission meetings this past year. We met with the Dept. of Building and Safety and City Planning on a regular basis. We spent many hours handling Los Feliz residents' complaints, inspecting problem locations, writing letters, and expending many more hours formulating resolutions with the help of Council District 4 staff. We also had meetings with Assemblyman Dario Frommer, his staff and the D.M.V. Commander in an

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Your Los Feliz Improvement Association in Action

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attempt to resolve an ongoing issue that has impacted Canyon Drive for five years. We were vigilant in monitoring filming projects and reporting violations to the Entertainment Industry Development Corporation. We joined forces with other anti-“off site” billboard groups to eradicate this blight throughout Los Angeles.

Our success rate in preserving the integrity of the Los Feliz community is dependent mainly upon enforcement and interpretation of the codes by the City. We win some cases and lose far too many others. It's certainly not because we haven't tried. Other hurdles to overcome are the tenacious developers and property owners out there who find loopholes in the law, are motivated by greed and display a serious lack of regard for this community. As you can imagine, we don't win many popularity contests in our attempt to keep Los Feliz a spectacular place in which to live.

If you have any questions or would like to attend a zoning committee meeting and get an education from the City experts on zoning and land use, or, if you'd like to make a presentation to the group prior to applying for a variance or conditional use permit, please call the LFIA at (323) 660-1914

Los Feliz Observer Committee

Bob Fouyer, Editor

As we usually do this time of year, we mail the spring issue of the Observer to all Los Feliz residents—not just members. Many new residents may not be aware of the existence of the LFIA and this is a great way of reaching them. We have enclosed a membership envelope and application in this issue for that purpose. Also, if anyone misses an issue, you may now view past issues on our web site (www.lfia.com).



Bob Fouyer

Our advertising revenue helps to offset the expense of publishing the Observer, and allows us to put out a newsletter that is like no other for an association such as ours. We encourage you to support our advertisers whenever possible. Anyone interested in advertising in the Observer may contact me at (323) 660-1914.

Beautification Committee

Margret Lohfeld, Chair

The members of the Beautification Committee work hard to keep Los Feliz beautiful. Homeowners, Marshall High School students—everyone helps. We paint out graffiti, pick up debris from our streets, take down illegal signs from telephone poles, trees, traffic signs and lamp posts.



Margret Lohfeld

Property owners can really help by keeping the sidewalks, curbs and the parkways in front of their properties neat and clean. They also can help by taking in their empty trash barrels on Thursdays. Some property owners keep their trash cans out for days after the pickup, creating an unsightly blemish on our neighborhood. Los Feliz is so beautiful—lets all try to keep it that way

We continue to plant more large deodar cedar trees in areas where needed. Several local residents donated trees last year in memory of relatives or in memory of September 11. Anyone interested in donating a tree can do so by calling Richard Stanley at (323) 906-2417. The cost is around \$1,000 for a large tree, including a commemorative plaque.

Membership Committee

John Yeomans, Chair

Membership in the LFIA fluctuates throughout the year but usually ends up with approximately 1,200 members. It's a big job keeping track of people who move away and soliciting new residents for membership. It's important that we maintain our membership numbers by finding new members to replace those that move from the area. Membership dues help finance our various projects, such as the planting of trees, materials used for graffiti and trash removal from our streets, printing costs of the Observer, and the supporting of projects at the various schools in the Los Feliz area. As always, our long-term goal is to have every Los Feliz resident a member of the LFIA. Anyone reading this issue who is not a member, please consider joining. There is a membership envelope and application enclosed in this issue of the Observer. As an added incentive to join, there is a discount on the purchase of “The History of the Los Feliz Improvement Association” that was published late last year. This is our 86th year and, would like to see a bumper crop of new members in 2002.



John Yeomans

Program Committee

Marilyn Bush

Four times each year LFIA holds a general meeting in the theatre of the Autry Museum of Western Heritage. We are indebted to the generosity of the Autry Museum, which enables us to have meetings in such a gracious environment. Program planning is developed with input from members and we endeavor to bring current issues of interest and importance to Los Feliz residents. We have guest speakers who bring their expertise in a wide variety of subjects including elected governmental representatives and candidates for office. Notices of each meeting are sent to all members of the LFIA and everyone on the general mailing list. Meeting announcements are also posted on our web site (www.lfia.com) and everyone is welcome.



Marilyn Bush



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YEAR

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2001-2002

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Los Feliz

Improvement Association

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Dear Los Feliz Neighbor,

We are truly fortunate to live in a part of the city surrounded by beauty, history, nature, and opportunity. True, we have to endure more traffic than we used to, but a quick and easy escape into Griffith Park on a gorgeous spring day and you feel lucky to be an Angelino. While there, you'll encounter visitors from around the world and hear how envious they are of our fine weather and, somehow, you can better deal with the traffic once again.

The world is in a precarious state. Los Angeles has known that feeling in previous years, but now there is a feeling of togetherness and collaboration between people all around the country. We are called upon to reach out to others and improve our world for the betterment of all. The Los Feliz Improvement Association has proudly cared for this community for 86 years and has every intention to continue to do so ... with your support.

The committees of LFIA hold regular meetings to further their goals. The Beautification Committee is always working to keep Los Feliz attractive. New cedar trees continue to be planted along the boulevard, wildflowers have been strewn along our freeway ramps, and cleanup/graffiti paintouts take place every month along major streets and around the schools. Volunteers are always welcome.

The Parks Committee continues to monitor events affecting Griffith Park. The Zoo, the Observatory and the Greek Theater are all vital assets to the quality of life in Los Feliz.

The Schools Committee continues to support all public schools in Los Feliz, including John Marshall, Thomas Starr King, Franklin Avenue and Los Feliz Elementary. The new Technology/Arts Magnet at King has successfully completed its first semester, and their new Principal, Byron Maltez, has given us every indication that it will only get better. The support demonstrated by LFIA to improve Thomas Starr King Middle School has made a positive impact on the entire community.

The Police and Traffic Committees continue to meet with local law enforcement. Soon we will have the Senior Lead Officers back on a full time schedule, working with us to begin new Neighborhood Watch groups, keeping us aware of crime and other safety issues. The CalFed/Los Feliz Community Police Center on Hillhurst remains a key meeting place for the entire community.

The Zoning Committee is always active, attending numerous hearings downtown and meeting with many developers attracted to Los Feliz. The billboard issue requires constant monitoring as does building along the boulevard itself. LFIA works hard to ensure that neighbors most affected have the input to which they are entitled.

LFIA general meetings for the membership continue, with informative evenings at the Autry Museum such as the Candidates' Forum hosted before the primary election for Council District 4. Our newsletter, The Observer, will continue to inform and delight readers, as will the new History of the Los Feliz Improvement Association.

All this activity would not be possible without your continued support. Please take a moment to demonstrate your faith in our neighborhood by renewing your membership, or joining, the Los Feliz Improvement Association. There are two special reasons to renew or to join this year. First, members who renew or join in 2002 may also purchase a copy of our new 86-year History at the special price of \$12 (in bookstores it sells for \$15 plus tax). The book, the only history of Los Feliz in print, is filled with not-to-be-forgotten vintage photos and stories about our neighborhood's heritage. Everyone who loves Los Feliz will want their own copy.

Second, LFIA is setting up an E-mail Notification System for its members to alert the neighborhood of important local issues, recent crime trends, and to allow you the opportunity to join us at any of our committee meetings. The more we become involved with our neighbors in improving the community, the more we empower ourselves to change our lives for the better. The E-mail Notification System will allow LFIA new opportunities to communicate with our membership. Your e-mail address will be kept confidential and not shared with others.

Please use the envelope enclosed in this Observer to respond, and be sure to include your E-mail address and check the box of a LFIA committee in which you would like to participate. We welcome your support. Annual dues are \$30 per household. To order the History of LFIA at the special price of \$12, please make your check for a total of \$42. Let's continue to make Los Feliz the best place to live in Los Angeles.

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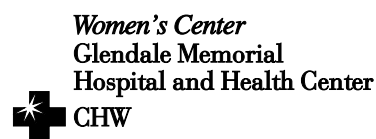
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Television Pioneer and Entrepreneur: Donna Matson

by Charlotte De Armond

“**D**onna Matson of Los Angeles is a pioneer, an entrepreneur, an educator and an adventurer who has done more things than most people dream of doing. In the process she has affected the lives of thousands of children, usually one community at a time.”

So opens Chapter 12 of *INDELIBLE IMAGES*, a new \$48.95 college textbook exploring the work of 19 women who pioneered the development of local television programming across the country. Chapter 12 is about Los Feliz' own Donna Matson, graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara, who was a classroom teacher for 12 years, teaching in California, Hawaii, Morocco, and the American Community School and the American University in Beirut, Lebanon.

Chapter 12 tells in graphic detail how Donna, after returning to the U.S. from Beirut, got a job teaching the second grade in Santa Ana in order to be close to the small boat she had acquired. She also conducted a lecture series on her travel adventures in a nearby community, and a member of her audience was a local school official. When the school superintendent decided to implement extensive use of televised lessons to improve the district's instructional programs, the school official who had been attending her lectures recommended Donna to be the television teacher in the new program. She got the job, with the mandate to do things that classroom teachers couldn't do. Donna headed for the ocean and did five on-camera, live science programs a week. She featured the waves, fish, birds and plants of the sea in pro-



Donna at Marineland: Donna was first TV teacher to do lessons live from various locations, this one from Marineland.

grams that transmitted live back to 32 classrooms by closed circuit television. Ultimately, she did about 240 on-camera programs, including a number of under-water lectures.

In 1967, Donna started the Educational Division of Western Video Industries. Within three years she had become a vice president and had produced about 300 programs. In 1970, when the FCC required networks to give up an hour of prime time nightly, production slowed at Western Video. David Wolper bought the company for its production capabilities, but showed little interest in Donna's instructional programs.

Chapter 12 describes what Donna did next: "Drawing on a burst of courage, she went to their finance person and announced she wanted to buy the educational division of Western Video Industries. She made an offer that she felt was low, but it was accepted. She had 30 days to raise \$500,000an unmarried woman with gross savings of \$7500."

Donna got the money. Two friends guaranteed part of the bank loan in exchange for stock, and the Wolper organization carried \$100,000 of the debt for two years. Donna named her company Western Instructional Television and, within seven years, had paid off all the bank loans, produced another 180 programs, and held 97 percent of the corporation's stock. Western ITV ultimately became one of the Nation's most successful producers of educational materials, television lessons, books, LP records and audio cassettes. It still operates in its original site on north Gower in Hollywood.



This picture is on the cover of Indelible Images, a new book with chapter on Donna Matson's achievements in television.

(continued on page 12)

Television Pioneer and Entrepreneur: Donna Matson

(continued from page 11)



Donna traveled by camel with Bedouins across Jordan's Wadi Rhum desert in 1962.

There are relatively few spots on the globe that Donna hasn't visited, and filmed, often more than once. She learned to ski in the Atlas mountains of Morocco, and went on to ski on the snowy slopes of Lebanon, Austria, Canada and the United States. First American woman to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, Donna crossed the Jordanian desert on a camel, went on a mountain gorilla photo safari in Rwanda-Burundi, filmed pygmies of the Ituri Forest, skin-dived with National Geographic Magazine for Phoenician artifacts in the Aegean Sea, danced with Masai warriors in Africa and wandered among the ruins of Angkor Wat. Doing her own filming, she explored the Amazon, Ganges and Nile Rivers, the jungles of Africa, South America and Borneo, and the Himalayas and Andes mountains to gather material for her programs. One



Donna with Masai: Donna has filmed the Masai 3 times since 1966.



Donna has sailed her 36-foot sloop for 24 years, including 18 months cruising off Baja, mostly alone. Donna spends many summer days cruising in Whistlin' Riggins'.

winter she spent months in the Indian Ocean on an underwater safari photographing fish in the waters of Thailand, Myanmar (Burma) and Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the Seychelles and the coast of East Africa.

Donna is a Los Feliz native, born at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital, just over a mile from where her parents lived on Rowena. She went to Thomas Star King, and John Marshall High, where she captained both the girls' bas-

(continued on page 13)



Donna with Barney at 1998 birthday party

Television Pioneer and Entrepreneur: Donna Matson

(continued from page 12)



Donna with Tiger: Donna was on-camera teacher in TV programs on jungle animals that sold worldwide.

ketball and volleyball teams. After spending most of her life exploring and filming around the world, she's back living in Los Feliz just two blocks from where she started. She still goes scuba diving in Belize three or four times a year.

I met Donna when I joined the LFIA board of directors in 1992. She was a vice president and chair of the Zoning com-



Donna in Tibet: In 1980, Donna was one of first outsiders permitted to enter Tibet, which had been closed for 30 years.



Donna & Indians: Donna spent eight months filming popular "Exploring South America" series. These are Yagua Indians in Amazon Basin near Iquitos, Peru.

mittee, and also served on the History and Beautification committees. Donna had protected the avocado trees on Avocado Street, and been instrumental in having them declared Los Angeles Historical and Cultural Monuments. She organized the "Save Our Library Coalition" to keep the Los Feliz Library in Los Feliz rather than in Barnsdall Park. The Coalition included LFIA as well as two other neighborhood associations, five schools and two non-profit groups. It was a long hard fight and ultimately successful. Library Commission President Frank Terry said on October 10, 1991, that "the proponents of the Hillhurst site (the Coalition) had made the strongest and most effective community effort of any he had experienced during his many years on the Commission."

In those days Donna talked more about sailing her 36-foot sloop alone back from Catalina to attend board meetings than about her work as president of Western Instructional Television. Other board members told me that she made educational films for television, but no one told me that she was the producer, director and often the photographer of more than 800 programs that have been shown in classrooms around the world. Many of these are still widely used 25 years later. Also, she has approximately 45,000 slides recording her junkets around the world, all indexed, ready to be used in documentaries she's plan-



Donna dressed appropriately to visit an Iranian mosque in 1964.

(continued on page 14)

Television Pioneer and Entrepreneur: Donna Matson

(continued from page 13)

ning. She's currently preparing two programs on Burma to present to the Discovery Channel.

After serving a busy five years, Donna left the LFIA board, but I was aware from time to time of her activities on behalf of her neighborhood. I got to know her well after the September 15, 1999 meeting of the Recreation and Parks Commission, which was considering the approval of a 50-year lease of Griffith Park land at Riverside Drive and Los Feliz Boulevard to the Los Angeles Children's Museum for an 80,000 square foot, three-story building and parking for 200 cars. The LFIA board of directors had instructed me to oppose the project on behalf of the association and its members, which I did. It was Donna Matson, however, who told the commissioners that if they approved the project, they would be giving away land that they did not own. She told them that 14 of the 21 lots included in the proposed lease did not belong to the city. In spite of Donna's testimony, however, the Board of Commissioners approved the project and the lease. (LFIA subsequently filed suit to stop the project,



Donna with elephant: Donna is using film shot in elephant forest in 1997 for documentary on Myanmar (Burma) she's preparing for the Discovery Channel.

and the City and the museum ultimately withdrew, paying legal costs of LFIA.)

Next month Donna flies to the island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras, in hopes of swimming with a 50-foot whale shark!



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Retrospective

By Richard Stanley

The Charles Seyler, Jr. Residence,
1921

Architecture by Stiles Clements and
Frank Meline Company

When noted actor, Tim Curry, found this Vermont Canyon estate about eight years ago, it had clearly seen better days. The prior owner bought the property as a teardown in the heady real estate market of the late 1980s. In fact, the city had already issued the demolition permit. Then the market nose-dived, the wrecker was delayed and eventually the bank foreclosed. What hadn't withered in the garden went feral. Deer, coyotes and other creatures made their homes in the once magnificent domain of one of Los Angeles's truly passionate gardener eccentrics, Charles Seyler, Jr.

Fortunately for Los Feliz, Mr. Curry bought the property and embarked on an almost archeological resurrection of the house and gardens. His labors were widely and justly celebrated in numerous publications prior to his selling the property in 2000. During the restoration, Mr. Curry was able to contact the niece of Mr. Seyler who shared with him many family snapshots of the early days of this most remarkable treasure. Some of these photographs and additional historical material are here shared for the first time with *Observer* readers.

Celebrity is not new to the Seyler residence. When new, the estate was extensively photographed for numerous publications, including *Architectural Digest*. About the gardens, one writer in 1924 noted:

The house looks south over the city, from its site across the mouth of a



Charles Seyler, Jr., c. 1933



Construction workers' tents at bottom of photo.





The patio and outdoor hearth



high valley adjoining Griffith Park. The gardens occupy the valley, with water as the dominating motive. The stream originates amongst the rocks at the head of the valley, and spills down a naturalized watercourse to the swimming pool, through a setting reminiscent of the South Seas. A waterfall succeeds the pool, and thence the water splashes down a series of cascades through a grove of tropical fruits. The cascade empties by way of a grotto into the patio, which is furnished with a profusion of flowers and plants, both for decoration and for shade, some set in pots and some in the ground. The stream finally disappears in the lily-pool at the lower level.

The house, about 4,000 square feet, with master and guest suites plus chauffeur's quarters, was decorated in the somewhat heavy taste then *de rigueur* for the Southern California Spanish/Italianate/Mediterranean idiom.

If the gardens and décor didn't wow visitors, other amenities might. Mr. Seyler, a *soigné* local insurance magnate who spent at least a month abroad each year, didn't let Prohibition deny him a cocktail on the patio at the foot of his horticultural magnum opus. Behind a panel on one side of his desk, and revealed with the press of a concealed button, is a steel vault with a false floor leading to a wine cellar. On the other side of his desk, another concealed button operates a second secret panel to reveal a bar lined with souvenir menus from now long-gone liners and foreign restaurants. Yet a third button on the opposite wall trips another concealed panel, this one a door to the chauffeur's quarters. Were the early '20s ever more techno—or delightful?

Take a look back, and you decide...

The living room



The guest room

The entry hall



Mrs. Seyler

The main entry gate



The cascade from below the pool



Antique mantle in living room



The front door



"South seas" swimming pool with beach



The lily pool



The master suite



Guests with Mr. Seyler (at right) on "Don Quixote" tile bench



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Why I Volunteered to be a Neighborhood Watch Block Captain

by Renate Demeyer

When I agreed to volunteer as a block captain for our street, it was really something I did out of the goodness of my heart. Though secretly there was some hope for adventure involved.

Apparently there had not been a block captain on our street for quite some time, and someone was desperately needed to help hand out Neighborhood Watch flyers. Did I really think that was all it was going to be? No. I saw myself helping old ladies cross the street, spying on strange cars from behind the curtain, writing down license plate numbers, and even chasing robbers up the street.

Now, five years later, I am rather disillusioned. At the least, I want a change in my title. Block Counselor, maybe? Or Block Mommy? Complaint Handler, to address complaints from everyone on the block?

My first year started comfortably. I wrote some snappy newsletters, trying to meet my neighbors and keep them informed about what's going on. Then came the first conflicts: A neighbor called me saying that she found it really great that I was a block captain now. She had been one for many years, but that it was fine with her, and by the way, who elected me? Another neighbor accused me of being worthless as a block captain because I was not there to protect her when she got assaulted in front of her house. Another time I saw someone climbing a neighbor's fence across the street during a power outage. I did feel a challenge there, but I was very brave and called the police. This turned out not to be a moment of heroism, because the person jumping the fence turned out to be the neighbor himself— thus creating another problem.

Then came the phone calls: Someone was very upset about the potholes in the street and asking what and when I was going to do something about it; someone else demanded newsletters, suggesting that they should be sent out at least every other week; another person complained about dog feces and, also, what could I do about that mangy coyote that is walking up and down the street in broad daylight.

Then the quarrels with one particular mailman, who informed me that it was against the postal code to leave

newsletters in mailboxes. He collecting them all and stuffed them back into my mailbox after I had spent an hour in the painfully hot and bright sunshine handing them out. My moment of total resignation came when chatting with a neighbor about the shortage of police officers and the situation at the LAPD. He just kind of shrugged it off, saying that he wasn't really all that worried because, luckily, our street has a block captain, not knowing I was it. I informed him that he was talking to the block captain, and then I turned and left him standing there with a surprised look on his face. I felt my pocket hollow, lacking a big gun to protect all my neighbors from thieves, coyotes, stray dogs, skunks and graffiti vandals.

During the years I did accomplish a few things. A four-way stop was finally put up at our intersection, I painted out lots of graffiti on our street, and I did successfully capture a stray dog out of someone's backyard and return it to his owner. I also made friends with virtually everyone that lives on our street and around the corner. I realized that I do feel protective of them, and I do mind what is going on in the neighborhood and whether everyone is safe. When my next-door neighbor's house was broken into, I also realized that we all need to stick together no matter what private over-the-fence conflicts there might be.

Now, as a word in closing, I must encourage everyone who does not have a neighborhood watch group on their street to be adventurous and start one. It doesn't take that much time to get people together, and there are moments when it is really good to know that there is someone next door watching out for you. Crime statistics are on the increase so everyone is encouraged to look out for one another.

In April we will have a big Neighborhood Watch Block Captain Brainstorm session. This is a desperately needed meeting that will hopefully revive Neighborhood Watches in the entire community and help form new groups. There is a plan to designate the Los Feliz Police Community Center on Hillhurst as "Neighborhood Watch Central," a place to meet on a regular basis with our senior lead officers and start a "Crime Alert Hotline" via e-mail

As you can see, many things are happening for you to get involved in your neighborhood. I hope we will see you there!

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This and That Around Los Feliz

by Richard Stanley

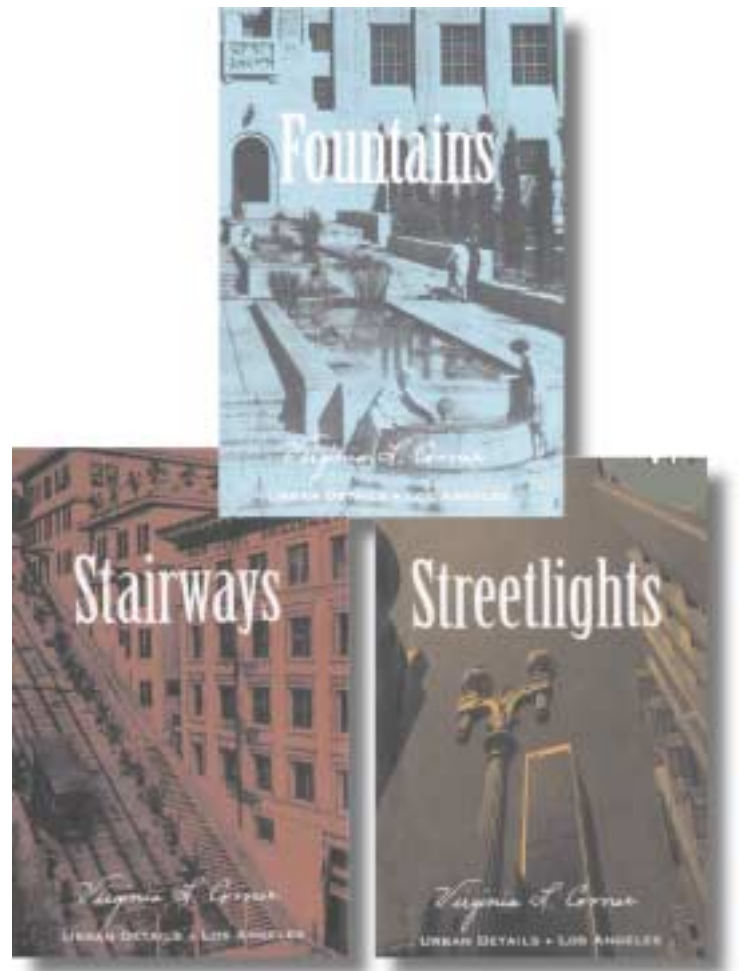
Throw the books at 'em

Need a fun gift for someone who appreciates local history? Why not consider the three entertaining books by Virginia L. Comer entitled *Fountains*, *Streetlights* and *Stairways*? Los Feliz is featured prominently in each of these pocket-sized hardbound books available at Skylight Books on Vermont (if you're lucky, Skylight may still have some autographed copies of each). *Stairways* notes our recently dedicated city monument steps (did you know that there are over 400 of 'em?) from Cromwell to Glendower plus the Tryon stairs with 147 steps. Comer notes that the "blue graffiti of nearly a decade has begun to fade". Maybe we should help it along?

Streetlights pays due credit to the initiative of artist Sheila Klein's "electrolier" collection at the shopping center at Santa Monica and Vermont, courtesy of the city's nearby Bureau of Street Lighting Office of Field Operations. Originally a temporary exhibit, the collection of historic lamps has been there quite some time. Let's hope it continues to burn brightly. It's really worth pulling into the parking lot to see—especially at night.

The book lends fresh appreciation for the often-overlooked lowly street lamp. Did you ever notice the variety in L.A., even in Los Feliz? Take, for example, the "General Electric Form No. 18" (a.k.a., "French King") lamps with their facets and finials on Monon and St. George Streets. The usual "Marblelite" lamppost in Los Feliz is most often teamed with the "Acorn" globe—and looks at home everywhere we call "home". But those "cobraheads"—OK, they look all right at LAX, but wouldn't our streets be more inviting with the older styles? Visit the Melrose Hill Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, on Oxford just off Marathon, or Carroll Avenue's Victorian Row and see the difference their vintage lamps make. Wouldn't it be "illuminating" to liberate some of those vintage lamps lying around the city yard at Santa Monica and Virgil? It can be done.

Finally, in *Fountains*, Comer makes the case that no city has really arrived until it has at least one fountain of note. Fortunately, Los Feliz has one of the best, the Mulholland Fountain, at Riverside Drive and Los Feliz Boulevard. Restored and rededicated in 1996 with the help of the LFIA, the fountain is a delight day or night. This show goes on not without some watchfulness. The DWP owns the fountain and occasionally must be goaded into keeping the pumps running and the lights on. Such is the cost of civility. Nevertheless, "our" fountain shines as a key example of the Moderne in our midst. Walter S. Claberg, who also designed the Water Palace exhibit at the San Diego World's Fair in 1935, designed the fountain in 1940. It marks the spot where a youthful William Mulholland lived while a "ditch tender" when L.A.'s water source was the Los Angeles River.





Western gray squirrel and Eastern fox squirrel

By the way, our Councilman, Tom LaBonge, lent his photographic talents to all three books. Wonder if I could get *his* autograph on my copies, too.

A Squirrely Item

Have you ever noticed that the “city” squirrels in our gardens are not the same as the “country” squirrels that live in Griffith Park? I have, so I grabbed my venerable Petersen Field Guide from college days and found out why. Seems that the rusty-colored, or “fulvous”, critters that I see every morning patrolling the branches of my olive trees are immigrants just like so many of us. These “Eastern fox squirrels” are native to the U.S. east of the Rockies, except New England. They were introduced to many West Coast cities, when or by whom I don’t know. Do you?

Their cousins up in the park are the all steel gray, native “Western gray squirrels”. You can see them around the Fern Dell entrance to Griffith Park, as well around the Greek Theatre. And, yes, their “ranges” do overlap. I’ve seen them commingled peaceably. Wonder if they produce hybrid young—a sort of bi-coastal rodent.



Mourning dove and spotted dove

Another case of similar native and introduced species can be seen around Los Feliz if you compare our native mourning doves with the spotted dove. The spotted dove is from China. It was introduced to L.A. (when?, by whom?) and has spread to Santa Barbara, Oceanside and Bakersfield, among other places. It looks and behaves like the mourning dove, but note the showy spotted collar absent on the mourning dove.

(By the way, our olive trees were also introduced—but that’s another story.)

Stamp the Champ

In case you missed it, the postal service issued yet another commemorative stamp honoring a former Los Feliz resident: Jack Dempsey. It was part of the decade-by-decade collection retrospective of the 20th Century. Dempsey was included in the Teens collection to note his winning the World Heavyweight boxing title. He lived in the large gray house on the south side of Los Feliz Boulevard between Laughlin Park Drive and Hobart. His carriage house can be seen just to the west with the red roof.



Once this was all one estate, but the properties have been owned separately since the 1940s. Both sold recently. Restorations are planned. The new owners of the carriage house, where Dempsey kept everything from his wife’s ’32 Ford coupe to his Duesenberg, discovered a secret panel behind which lay some very vintage hooch from Hollywood’s heyday. Stay tuned for an update in a future *Observer*.

Please Don’t Pick the Trees

Many people, when they think of our city monuments, think of bricks and mortar. Mostly they are right, but some monuments are living. One

of the city's living monuments runs from Riverside Drive to Western Avenue along Los Feliz Boulevard. Monument number 67 denotes the cedar trees. These *Cedrus deodora* (Indian or Himalayan cedar, native to India and Pakistan) and *Cedrus atlantica* (Blue Atlas cedar, native to Morocco and Algeria) trees were originally planted by the Los Feliz Improvement Association and the Los Feliz Women's club in 1916. Our cedar trees were declared monuments in 1970.

Over the years, some trees have died or been toppled by storms. The LFIA has barely been able to replant enough trees to make up for the rate of attrition. Lately a disturbing new trend has started. Property owners along Los Feliz Boulevard have been vandalizing the trees. Some of the small trees were dug up and stolen. One person decapitated the tree in front of his property to use as a Christmas tree. Another man trimmed a tree into an abnormal, severe conical shape so that he could decorate it with Christmas lights. One woman even cut down a huge deodar last year because she didn't like the needles it shed. It's important to remember that street trees are owned by the city, not the adjacent property owner. Even if you planted the tree, once it's in the ground, it's the city's, and it's protected. Cutting a street tree in any way without a permit to do so is an act of vandalism. Before you do anything to the deodars—or other street trees, please call Councilman LaBonge's office first for helpful advice.

On a brighter note, recently the first of the commemorative trees, paid for by local residents and planted by the beautification committee of the LFIA, were planted along the boulevard. Two trees were planted in memory of relatives, and one was planted in memory of September 11, 2001. All are marked by bronze commemorative plaques. The LFIA hopes that the idea will take root as well as the new trees, and that soon all the gaps in the Boulevard's planting will be filled. What would you commemorate with a living monument? Call me, and I'll help you arrange it—(323) 906-2417. The cost is about \$1,000 for a large tree, including plaque.

Weather Report:
Snow In Los Feliz

Snow in Los Feliz? You betcha. Old-timers may remember we do get the white stuff now and then. Mostly then, but here's some proof I rediscovered in my archives recently—from 1932 (a slushy Commonwealth Avenue—we ran this a few years ago) and later at the Observatory, opened in 1935, with snow on the domes.



Margret Lohfeld and Richard Stanley help plant commemorative trees



Commemorative plaque at tree planted in memory of September 11, 2001



There may have been snow in the old days, but the poppies, planted by the LFIA and yours truly, are beginning to bloom again this year, along with lupines and “Farewell to Spring” blossoms. It’s worth parking your car along Riverside Drive and walking over to the on-ramps of the I-5 to take a close-up look. One pedestrian last year described the bloom as “breath-taking”. This year looks promising, despite the dry spell of late.



Celebrating 75th Anniversary and Welcoming a New Principal at Thomas Starr King

by Mary Beth Sorenson

This year Thomas Starr King Middle School celebrates its 75th anniversary of educating our community's children, a time when Los Feliz and the surrounding communities can be proud and supportive of the positive changes taking place at our local middle school. A few noteworthy changes are: the school received a Los Angeles Conservancy Award for the restoration of a 1936 WPA (Works Progress Administration) statue under the guidance of Los Feliz Improvement Association member, Mary Rodriguez; the school started a gifted/high ability/technology/arts magnet program; and the campus looks great with a vibrant new paint job and ongoing monthly landscaping performed by parent and community volunteers.

In addition, King has welcomed a new principal, Byron Maltez. Maltez was selected as King's principal last November and has been working diligently to make improvements and build on the school's strengths. He brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the position of principal. He was most recently the Operations Administrator for Local District E, and he has been Assistant Principal at Nightingale, John Muir and Virgil Middle Schools. He was

Title 1 Coordinator and Dean of Discipline at Chester Nimitz Middle School, a science teacher at Charles Drew Middle School, and biology and algebra teacher for the United States Peace Corps in Ghana, West Africa.

Maltez is a dedicated professional who works tirelessly to give every student the best possible educational experience. He is personable, friendly and welcomes involvement and support from the community. The teachers and staff have embraced his friendly style and his genuine interest in the students and families. His hard work and dedication will benefit the students and strengthen our community for years to come. If you have the opportunity, please introduce yourself to Mr. Maltez and give him a warm welcome to the neighborhood.



King Middle School's new principal, Byron Maltez

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What Will Redistricting Changes Mean for Los Feliz

by Mark Siegel

Redistricting is the process of adjusting political districts undertaken every ten years following the release of new census figures. The process is intended to correct for population and demographic changes reflected by census data. For the first time ever, as a result of our new city charter, a civilian commission has been appointed to act as an advisory body to the City Council during the current City of Los Angeles' redistricting.

The city charter directs the commission to create districts (if possible) that are compact and contiguous, use natural boundaries (such as geographical features or freeways), and also respect "communities of interest." Federal and State law also mandate the creation of minority-majority districts if possible, although race is not intended to be the sole factor used in drawing any district. In addition to these mandates, the Los Angeles City Council Redistricting Commission must be sensitive to issues like the growing secession movements in the San Fernando Valley, San Pedro and Hollywood areas.

With the deadline for the City Council Redistricting Commission to present its report to City Council extended by almost a full month, people may wonder whether all this extra time will result in more opportunities for public comment on the Commission's draft map. The answer to this question is yes, and no.

Most of the extension is being used by Commission Staff to prepare its report, but the extension may benefit the public somewhat. Although no additional public hearings have been scheduled, the deadline for public comment on the draft map was extended to March 26, for those inclined to send their points of view by mail. The Commission also added a couple of meetings to its schedule, creating one or two extra public comment periods for those preferring to voice last minute pleas in person.

However, the Commission is not really in its gathering public testimony mode anymore. Hearings have come and gone, and commissioners have listened dutifully to numerous groups, attempting to incorporate their requests into the draft when possible. Currently, the Commission seems to be fine-tuning the draft and is not likely to make many major changes as a result of continued public input. Most of the actual line drawing was done in phase two of the Commission's process. These were private "cluster meetings" that allowed commissioners to represent the interests of their appointing Council Members in discussion and negotiation of proposed boundaries for each specific area.

The purpose of these "cluster meetings" was to accomplish the Commission's stated goal of creating a viable map. In other words, a map that the City Council will vote to accept without major changes. To accomplish this goal, the districts drawn must be legal, and they must meet the requirements of current Council members. Not everyone is pleased with the results, and the Commission continues to grapple with difficult issues such as how to unite more of

Koreatown without splitting Silverlake, what to do with the San Fernando Valley and how to number the new districts.

Despite efforts throughout this redistricting process by neighborhood activists and Commissioners to better understand the complex makeup of LA's diverse neighborhoods, and a city charter mandate to leave such "communities of interest" intact to the extent possible, redistricting is by nature a political process. The use of a civilian commission as an advisory body to the Council on this issue does not mean this redistricting has been or will be less political than any of its predecessors.

Ultimate decision-making power still rests with the City Council, and the delay in turning the matter over to the Council has only delayed temporarily the need for activists to confront this reality. Perhaps the biggest benefit to the additional weeks before the draft is presented to City Council, is that it allows dissatisfied community groups more time to organize and prepare to lobby the Council directly. Sources at City Hall say the City Council is not likely to discuss redistricting at all before passing the new budget, which will not happen until May. In the meantime, it looks like everyone has plenty of time to bring any and all concerns to the appropriate Council Member...

What will redistricting do in CD#4 & CD#13?

The revised draft map is out, and changes in the immediate Los Feliz area appear to be minimal at this point.

CD#4 picked up all of Sherman Oaks and Studio City in this draft, and for the moment, it is the only district still straddling the mountains. CD#4 also picked up the southern portion of Thai Town in an effort to unify that community, which resulted directly from public testimony at several hearings. The border in that area now extends down along the 101 freeway to Santa Monica Blvd. and along Santa Monica all the way to Vermont. As part of a plan to allow Koreatown to be represented by two rather than four districts, CD#4 lost a chunk in the Koreatown/Wilshire Center area between Wilshire and Normandie and Melrose and 6th. A portion of N. Hollywood included in the first draft was also removed from the district. One controversial change to CD#4 is a small finger extending into part of Silver Lake and dividing a neighborhood previously represented by one council district only. Some see this as an attempt to make up for population lost when Wilshire Center went to CD#13.

CD#13 is essentially unchanged from the first draft map. It lost the part of Thai Town that is now in CD#4 and gained more of Koreatown, so that its Western border is now along Wilton Pl. instead of Normandie, and the Southern border is smoothed out along 6th St. all the way to Hoover. CD#13 also lost the piece of Silver Lake put into CD# 4 and gained in the Eagle Rock area, smoothing out the border in the Northeastern portion of the district.

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Crime Ridden Motel on Sunset Will Finally Close

(continued from page 2)

owners and residents shared very personal testimonies describing muggings, assaults, robberies, and burglaries. Councilmembers LaBonge and Garcetti both pledged their support and promised to help in anyway that they could. The next step was a hearing before the Planning and Land Use Management on March 5.

Unfortunately, before the next hearing took place, on February 20, at approximately 9:00 p.m., another shooting occurred in front of the motel. A 25-year-old female was shot once in the leg, once in the buttock and survived. No suspect was found, but police suspect the shooting was gang related. Neighbors for miles around were alerted to the situation by the numerous helicopters hovering above. The story was also broadcast on the 10:00 p.m. news.

At the March 5 Planning and Land Use Management Committee, Councilmembers Ed Reyes and Hal Bernson ruled to uphold the Zoning Administrators order and revoke the Certificate of Occupancy license of Edward J. and Frances C. Eng.

This brings us to March 13, when the Los Angeles City Council, in a 10-0 vote, revoked the operating permit of the Sunset Pacific Motel. I was one of the speakers to give testimony on how the motel has adversely affected the school and

the neighborhood. My friend Terri was interviewed by the LA Times. She was notably moved by her civics lesson for the day, and so was I. Maybe you can't always fight City Hall, but sometimes perseverance pays off and you can make a difference.

I said at the beginning of this story that there were two hearings on March 13 that greatly affected Thomas Starr King. The second one involves the public stairwells that lead from Myra Ave. to Sunset Blvd. (see photos). They have been closed to the public for decades. Senior Lead Officer Al Polehonki believes they are a potential danger to our students because people have been inhabiting them and utilizing them for illegal means. Again, we believe there is a connection to the motel, which is just 1/2 block away. Well, the Board of Public Works approved sealing the stairway permanently, with concrete. This way the sidewalks along Sunset Blvd. will no longer be obstructed by chain link cages, and the Myra Ave. underpass will be safer for students to cross through. We'd like to see a mural painted in the tunnel someday as well.

On March 20, members of the community, empowered by their latest victories, met at the Vista Theater for an event entitled "Light Up the Night." A one-hour walk took everyone through the darkest streets of the neighborhood, identifying where additional lights should be installed. Joining the community was the LAPD, Neighborhood Watch, the Bureau of Street Lighting, and Council Districts 4 & 13. Perhaps one day we will be able to enjoy walking our streets with friends and family on a summer evening without fear of becoming a crime statistic.



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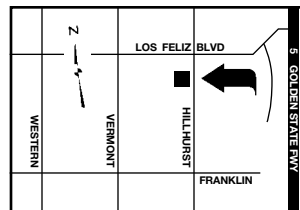


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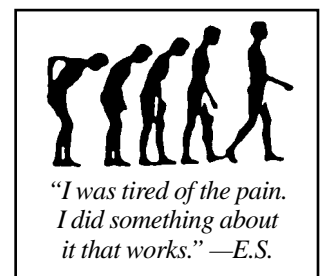
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