



OVERVIEW

FRANKLIN HILLS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

ISSUE No. 11

SPRING 1994

Tree Planting Day Revealed Our Best And Worst

by Carol Mason

Something went terribly wrong and wonderfully right on Tree Planting Day on March 12. It wasn't the weather that went wrong—it was a warm, clear Saturday morning. Nor was it the delicious food, the hot coffee and cold drinks, the fledgling trees or the tight organization. The problem was people—over 80 adults who had called to sign up just days before the event never showed up. Breaking commitments is all too common these days, but when 80 adults all break their commitment to an event like this, it has an effect on everyone else involved.

When the Los Angeles Conservation Corps trucks rolled up to the corner of Prospect and Talmadge at 8:30 am with 40 trees and lots of shovels, they were met mainly by children. Dozens of Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts and their stalwart leaders from four troupes rose cheerfully to the task. The kids truly carried the day, and unfortunately, the brunt of the hard work of digging, shoveling, lifting and planting.

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Lyric Avenue, in 1925, looking east, over Hyperion Avenue. First cross-street is Griffith Park Bl.

THREE SCORE AND FOURTEEN YEARS AGO...

That's when baby Clarabelle Westberg and her six year older sister Bernice moved to the house they still share, "I remember Franklin out here was a dirt street when we built in 1920...My folks got a big assessment when they paved it [about 1922]. They were buying the house and they got all these bills and then they got this big assessment and they had to struggle with that."

Bernice Westberg Fletcher also remembers that Franklin Avenue stopped before it got to what we now call the Franklin Hills. "You couldn't go up Franklin. There was no street there. We had an Easter egg hunt there when I first moved here...just east of what's Talmadge, there wasn't any Talmadge there either. And when it was rainy the first couple of years there would be a pond and we'd catch polliwogs and we had a little raft there one time."

The neat white bungalow built by their father, an electrician who kept the Red Cars running on the Pacific Electric Railway, has fared well over the last 74 years according to Clarabelle, "it hasn't fallen down yet to earthquakes or termites, no, it's in pretty good shape." Bernice adds, "we talk about moving but then we think we've got too much stuff."

Included in that "stuff" are the accompanying photos. After 69 years Clarabelle no longer remembers exactly where she was standing when the photograph above was taken. But she does recall, "we were just hiking

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Though many have been the times I've felt life is an isolated endeavor – we are actually inseparable, with my actions affecting you, yours affecting me and with consequences scarcely imaginable by either party.

Recently, we acquired a neighbor, young and female, who lives a very quiet life during the week in her large house immediately adjacent to and above our property. We have not had the opportunity to meet her (and would welcome the chance), yet she has affected our lives and her other neighbors lives in ways she clearly cannot conceive.

I'm talking parties here...major PARTYING! Not your ordinary party, which we've been known to do with relish, but parties that seem to start somewhere else earlier in the evening and then migrate, full-blown, with blow-out-the-windows rock music and full-voice multiple person conversations outside. All this starting at 2:30 a.m. and going into the wee hours.

Now I don't want to seem like a curmudgeon and I didn't stand out in my back yard and try to get their attention, nor did I call the cops, so I suppose I deserve blame for not confronting them. But summer is on its way. Are we going to have to sleep with all our windows closed so she and her friends can do their thing? What happened to the concept of "consideration for others?" Clearly it's not just her – her friends are standing on her balcony or in her yard laughing and yelling at 3:00 a.m. Don't we all have to abide by some cultural rules here? "Can't we all get along?"

As Rule 10 of Ann Landers' "10 Commandments of Neighborliness" states: "Thou shalt not hold wild parties or orgies that lasteth until the wee hours unless thou inviteth thy neighbors too.

— DON WALDROP

Dear friends:

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you for the many kindnesses shown me during my recent illness. The many trips to the doctors, to therapy, to the grocery store and to those expensive pharmacies have made my life more tolerable and were done with such good humor and patience.

I think it is indicative of what my activities have meant with the Association and Neighborhood Watch. Although I have wonderful, good, close neighbors, no other way would I have had such a network of willing friends to befriend me. It is what our associations are all about. Expanding our relationships with each other to make friends, to know our neighbors, and to help in times of need.

I thank you all from the bottom of my heart and hope to once more be a part of it all in the not-too-distant future.

VI WEBER

Ed. note: Vi Weber, FHRA Board Member and Disaster Preparedness Chair, suffered a stroke in February and is recovering at her home.

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HOTLINE (213) 664-7247**

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The Franklin Hills OVERVIEW is published as often as possible. We invite your comments on matters relating to articles and the community and, space permitting, we will publish letters mailed to *Editor, OVERVIEW, Box 29122, Los Angeles, CA 90027*

EARTHQUAKE

WE MUST BE ABLE TO CARE FOR OURSELVES

Disaster Preparedness Response Training

Conducted by the Los Angeles Fire Department - Free

Classes begin Wednesday, June 29,

and run seven consecutive Wednesday nights from 7:00-9:00 pm

Location: L.I.L.A. (French-American School) Library, 4155 Russell Avenue

Sign up TODAY - Registration limited to 60 people

Call CHRIS BOUTELLE at 213.666-5548 or the FHRA Hotline at 213.664-7247

OPINIONS

Dreaming of Community

by Sandra Harper

For those of us who worked hard on the FHRA March 12 Tree Planting Day, the low turnout of volunteers from Franklin Hills was a huge disappointment. We were delighted that 120 volunteers actually made the phone call to register but, inexplicably, less than 30 showed up. We had to depend on the crew of 50 workers from the Los Angeles Conservation Corps to get the trees into ground that was rock hard from years under cement or without water.

Apart from the LACC and in the absence of more adults, the difficult work of the day fell mainly to children—yes, children. Four Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops from areas outside Franklin Hills lined up at 8:30 a.m. sharp to help us beautify our streets. The few adults present had a chance to show these kids that some of us love and care about our homes and are interested in creating a more beautiful world for them.

We achieved our goal that day: we planted 40 new Cinnamon Camphor trees, and we know they will grow to be very beautiful indeed. Twenty years from now, the barren cementscape of Prospect Avenue will look much like Hillhurst Avenue north of Los Feliz Boulevard. The same camphor trees planted there 50 years ago now give that street its luxurious character, charm and grace. The neighbors on Hillhurst Avenue 50 years ago were thinking of the future, and now a new generation is reaping the rewards. That is what some of us want for Franklin Hills, but we simply cannot do it alone. We need more folks to get involved in building our neighborhood into a friendly, lovely place to live. There is actually a powerful urgency to this need these days: the dramatic increase in gang encroachment, graffiti and crime is unmistakable and the only way to stop it is to band together.

I know many of you have a hard time imagining how planting a tree can fight crime. In the short run, you're right, there's not much correlation. But it's exactly those small acts of coming together, meeting your neighbors, talking with them and caring not just about your street, but your neighbors two or three blocks away—that's what creates a united community. Our Tree Planting Day wasn't just about planting trees. It was also about nurturing this sense of community, and in that goal we failed miserably.

So what went wrong? Only those 80+ people who registered and didn't show up know what turned their good intentions to abandonment. When I asked people in Franklin Hills to sign up, some said things like, "I don't like getting my hands dirty," or "I'm not strong enough," and skittered away. But we needed people to organize food donations, carry water to thirsty workers or put bandaids on a little Cub Scout's blisters. Incredibly, only a handful of people who live on the streets to be planted came out to help. What folks may not realize is just how much fun it is to come out for such an event—there's usually plenty of great food and camaraderie—and how really good it feels to do something meaningful outside our insular little lives.

I hear two statements all the time: "L.A. has no sense of community," and "I'm too busy to get to neighborhood functions." We all have busy lives, but there will always be something profoundly lonely about your life if you stay isolated from your neighbors. To have a community, to keep it safe and beautiful, is simple. All it takes is two or three hours on an occasional Saturday to make an enormous difference in the quality of your life and a lot of others, too—especially our children.

WHAT WE'RE UP TO

respectfully submitted by Bruce
Carroll Secretary FHRA

Since the winter issue of Overview the FHRA has been busy on several fronts. The big ones, like our very successful post-earthquake meeting, where 24 neighborhood clusters were organized, and the 2nd annual tree planting are reported on elsewhere in this issue. But others deserve at least a little pat on our own backs.

In January, representatives from the FHRA and five other neighborhood associations met to found the Greater Los Feliz Area Coalition. Its aim is to present a powerful united voice to the powers that be on issues of concern to the whole area from Laughlin Park and Los Feliz Oaks on the west to FHRA on the east. Matters such as traffic flow, community police liaison, and issuance of liquor licenses are some of the topics discussed so far. Frank Carber from The Oaks is the coordinator, Bruce Carroll from FHRA is the recorder, and Gail Brewer from Laughlin Park will be the treasurer

when we have a treasury.

Also in January the FHRA appeared at a zoning appeals hearing on the proposed addition to 2127 Lyric. In the last Overview we reported on our serious initial objections to the project's overall dimensions. At the hearing, with plans altered, the FHRA agreed no harm would be done by a slight side yard setback variance. We still believe the plans may be 2 feet over the 36' height limit, but that's a matter for us to keep after the building inspectors to enforce. As we've said before, if you get a notice that a neighboring property is requesting a zoning variance, PLEASE let us know. The hotline number is 664-7247.

In February, the board signed a petition brought by FHRA member Melinda Taylor. She and her neighbors are trying to get Councilman Ferraro and various city agencies to do something (like demolition) about the burned-out derelict of a once drug infested triplex at

1442 Manzanita. The building, which is mostly boarded up, is an attraction to kids from the nearby Thomas Starr King Middle School and should, at the very least, be securely fenced.

In March and April, we discussed the merits of two liquor license applications. One for Pizza Plus, a take-out place at Vermont and Franklin, next to the 7-11, the other at a now defunct cocktail lounge on Hillhurst around the corner from the Vista Theater. As in much of LA, there are already many more liquor licensees in our area than Alcoholic Beverage Control guidelines permit. And we want to be sure that if any new licenses are brought into the area they will be at the kind of establishments that enhance rather than degrade our commercial surroundings.

In April, we planned an exciting annual election meeting for Wednesday May 25th.

THE FALLACY OF THE HIGHER GOOD —Or, why nothing works anymore—

by Alan Kishbaugh

President, Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations, Inc.

Have you noticed that nothing works anymore? Life seems to be full of problems and nothing gets fixed right either the first time, or at all. Worse still, there's always a reason why "it" can't be done, or the company is not responsible. "Our computer's down," "Our policy doesn't allow refunds," "We cannot be held responsible."

Or, it's because of "poverty, racism, special privilege, a broken home, low self-esteem, class warfare, sexism, ageism, homophobia, a virus or a glitch." Our machines and our sophistication with public relations techniques have taught us how to come up with varied and innovative explanations for why we can't do something we're hired to do, elected to perform, or paid to fix. We've

evolved the most elaborate inventory of rationales for not taking responsibility for our actions . . . or inactions.

We've given the machines a free pass for electronic and mechanical failure. And, it seems we've done the same for government officials—allowed them to adopt a mechanism, a point of view, a principle, a philosophy with which to duck responsibility. This is the unwritten but often evoked concept of 'The Higher Good.'

You won't find it in any manual, or carved on a lintel over a prominent doorway, but it's as operative as property taxes and parking meters.

What it has come to mean is that some areas of government, some laws, some responsibilities are not seen to,

enforced, fulfilled, because someone or some group of someones decides that they are not as important as other areas.

While every department, every arm of government, must set priorities with regard to procedures and expenditures, none of them have the right to arbitrarily decide not to deliver what the people have paid for and are expecting to receive.

This belief system, the concept of 'The Higher Good,' gets substituted for across-the-board performance, what we used to call accountability.

We've let traffic laws go by the boards. A few places get a speed trap now and then, but mostly the unsupervised driving continues to deteriorate, a

Please see FALLACY p. 11