

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

See SISTERS, p. 6

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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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

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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

• community phones

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Security: (310) 557-5354.

CITY ANIMAL REGULATION: (213) 222-7138

COUNCILMAN JOHN FERRARO, 4th District:

Room M-30, City Hall, 200 Spring St., (213) 485-3337

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FRANKLIN FOTOS

As you have no doubt noticed, the editor of the Overview has an affinity for photographs taken in the early years of the Franklin Hills, Los Feliz and Silver Lake areas. We are trying to assemble a pictorial history of our district and would like to hear from anyone with such photos. If you grew up here, or if your parents built a house here, or if you inherited some photographs, please give us a call on the Hotline.

We guarantee they will be handled very carefully while we have a copy negative made and the originals will be returned to you in their original condition. Please call us.

Disaster Preparedness

FHRA Disaster Preparedness needs to know about the trained professionals living in our area. There is a clear need for doctors, nurses & trained emergency personnel in a disaster. If you are willing to assist in such an event, please contact the Hotline: 664-7247

DOES GRAFFITI BUG YOU?

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For information, contact Laurence Hadja
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SISTERS, from p. 1

around with our cousins." Susie and Fred Hammersley were visiting from Salt Lake City in 1925. Clarabelle (left) is standing next to her brother Dwight who now lives in Iowa.

In the photo at right, little Bernice (left) and her older sister Alice (right) are taking care of Helen Griffith, who here looks too little to say "Let's go to my Grandpa's big park and play." Besides, there were lots of adventures to be had even closer to home.

Bernice vividly remembers construction of the Shakespeare Bridge. "That bridge was just about finished and on a dare I walked on the railing a third of the way across before I got scared because then it was clear down just like on the north side. The school wasn't there. Why I didn't fall off I don't know. I was 12 when that happened, almost 13."

They also remember more than 20 years later seeing a daily parade of dump trucks from the Hollywood Freeway excavation filling in the area on the south side of the bridge where the LILA school is now.

But that school isn't the only one built on fill. "Before the Franklin School was built," says Bernice, "I remember when my folks bought the lot they didn't even notice that [the school site] was a dump. That's filled ground. It wasn't a dump for garbage. It was a dump for extra dirt and rock and we played in there a bit...So the school is built on 30 foot piers."

The girls' parents were upset when they finally saw the dump which was right across Franklin from their lot. But they were no doubt pleased when their Clarabelle became one of the inaugural students at the Franklin Avenue school in 1926. "When I think of it, I went to two schools the first day they were built, Franklin and John Marshall. I never went to Thomas Starr King because it was full and John Marshall was empty so they started it with the 7th grade. I was there for 6 years (1931-1937). Can you imagine that? How boring."



But life in the neighborhood wasn't boring. "They made movies up and down Franklin and Hillhurst, you know, old cars and the comedies, because it was so open they used the neighborhood...We had movie people sitting on the front porch while they made movies in the front end of the school ground."

Clarabelle kept a list of movie stars she spotted all around town, from Johnny Weismuller and Lupe Valez in the Broadway Hollywood to Sterling Hayden on a drunken early morning street car ride, "It certainly looked like the cat had dragged him in...nobody paid any attention, but I recognized him." There was one actor she noticed often in the neighborhood. "I don't know if anybody ever remembers Johnny Hines who was a "B" picture person probably...when you go up Franklin there's a big house. I think it's kind of green now, he lived there and he drove by here all the time in some big open convertible. He was nice looking and he did have a name in the movies at that time but not a star."

Both women remember the little red shanty just west of the bridge that gave way to two townhouses in recent times. "We called it the tack house. That belonged to the Haigs. I guess they had a horse." Before that they recall some western star, maybe Tom Mix, had the place. Bernice fondly remembers another landmark that disappeared a very long time ago, "When we first moved here...the block from Commonwealth to Hillhurst [on the north side of Franklin] was a reservoir. It was very big and we used to skate around the side of it. It was an empty reservoir, but there was water in the bottom, you know."

When Bernice married she moved out of the house on Franklin but kept close to her roots. She lived in rather cramped quarters, at 2468 Lyric, right after World War II due to the housing shortage. "I lived in two rooms with my second husband and my two kids...our friends lived above and rented us two rooms." Clarabelle remained in the Franklin Avenue house and took care of her invalid mother and her dad, who died in 1973 at age 91. He'd come to the US from Sweden in 1900 to escape military service. "He just looked at all those grubby soldiers and didn't want to be one." Clarabelle also recalled how her dad saved her from her first radio. "I enjoyed the crystal set and I'd go to bed and listen and my father worked the 3 to 11p.m. shift so when he'd come home he'd come in and here I was all tangled up with the earphones and he'd take them off of me and rescue me."

They can still remember when Hillhurst was called Maubert Street but there have been bigger changes. "Hillhurst was houses and empty lots. It

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wasn't a place where there were stores at all. Only Vermont had stores. There was Canter's dry goods store, Woolworths was north of Hollywood Boulevard on the east side of Vermont at the corner of Kingswell." And groceries came from 1856 Vermont." We went to Doud's Grocery. Their clientele lived above Los Feliz. It was a very nice store at which we had a charge account." They also remember that Samuel Doud kept W.C. Fields at least partially supplied with liquor.

Some things about the '90's irk the sisters: Bernice finds "that some of the new neighbors will be walking two abreast and taking up the sidewalk and I'm walking along and I think, Hey I'm not going to get off the sidewalk and so I just wait." Clarabelle thinks, "people are not so friendly. They don't have time to talk and there are so many foreign languages. I wish people would learn English."

And about the future they both said in near unison "we talk about moving but where do you go?" Clarabelle continues "I feel this neighborhood is a good place to be, we're not in too bad a place." But Bernice chimes in, "you wouldn't want to go walking." After living in the same house for 74 years Clarabelle's words of wisdom should not surprise anyone, "just hang in there."

(Bernice Fletcher & Clarabelle Westberg were interviewed by Bruce Carroll and Don Waldrop)

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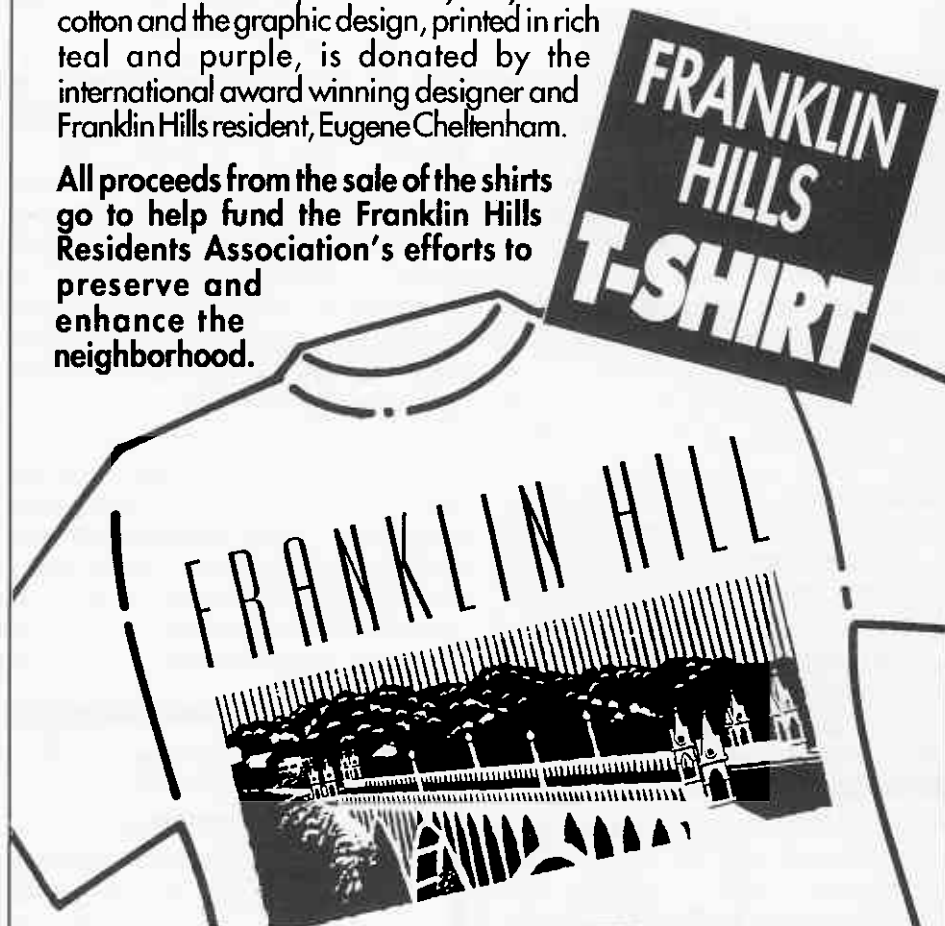
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A TALE OF TWO LIBRARIES

by
Bruce Carroll

Our Los Feliz Branch Library has joined the ranks of the homeless. Even before the January quake, the badly-overcrowded, asbestos-afflicted, Hillhurst storefront was in trouble, now the library is waiting for a new temporary home while work on its long delayed permanent home continues to generate more stacks of paper, than stacks for books.

The city was ready to lease the old Post Office building on Hollywood Boulevard before a flurry of faxes from Donna Matson's Save Our Library Coalition got the Board of Library Commissioners to vote their preference for the former Chef Pierre's Market on Hillhurst at Kingswell. But, whether books and tapes will replace broccoli and tomatoes is a matter now up to the City Council.

The General Services Department, Office of Leasing and Mall Management has reportedly recommended that the old Post Office can meet the library's needs and save the city money with a cheaper lease. But, Bill Garcia, deputy to Councilman John Ferraro, says their office still supports the Hillhurst location as the one better able to serve the community.

How long the temporary site will have to serve the community is still hard to determine with much certainty. Leslie Nordby, who honchos the library's branch building projects says. "That about 18 months from now we should be ready for construction." But, the city still has not acquired the land. The report of an outside appraiser on the current value for the property at the southeast corner of Hillhurst and Franklin is due this month. Then, check in hand, the City Attorney can file it with the court. Ms. Nordby does not expect the condemnation process to slow things down any further.

Actual design can begin once architect Barton Phelps, who was selected about five years ago, signs the city's contract. It's been sitting unsigned since last

year. Mr. Phelps has won awards for projects at the DWP and UCLA where he's currently working on a seismic make-over for Royce Hall. His recent work on the Seeds Elementary school at UCLA will be featured in the July issue of Architecture magazine.

As for the Phelps philosophy, "In Los Angeles something snapped right after World War II and a lot of the civic buildings of 50-60s are mundane. We like buildings with what we call civic memory, but that doesn't mean they look like 1935, they look like 1990's, but we try to overlay them with what we call a civic presence...I think it's going to be a great project. We are really looking forward to it and, of course, we've had lots and lots of thoughts about it. It's just until

we find out more of what other people feel about it, it's not fair for me to say."

Soon—within a month after the contract is signed—there will be a meeting where you'll get a chance to be one of those "other people." Ms. Nordby explains, "what we do is ask the community for input on things that they consider important before any design is started, and then we have a second community meeting after the architect puts kind of a schematic to those ideas that came out of the original meeting."

It's a Dickens of a process, but after the design undergoes numerous reviews, we can only hope that Barton Phelps will be able to say of the Los Feliz Library..."It is a far far better thing that I do than I have ever done."

earthworks

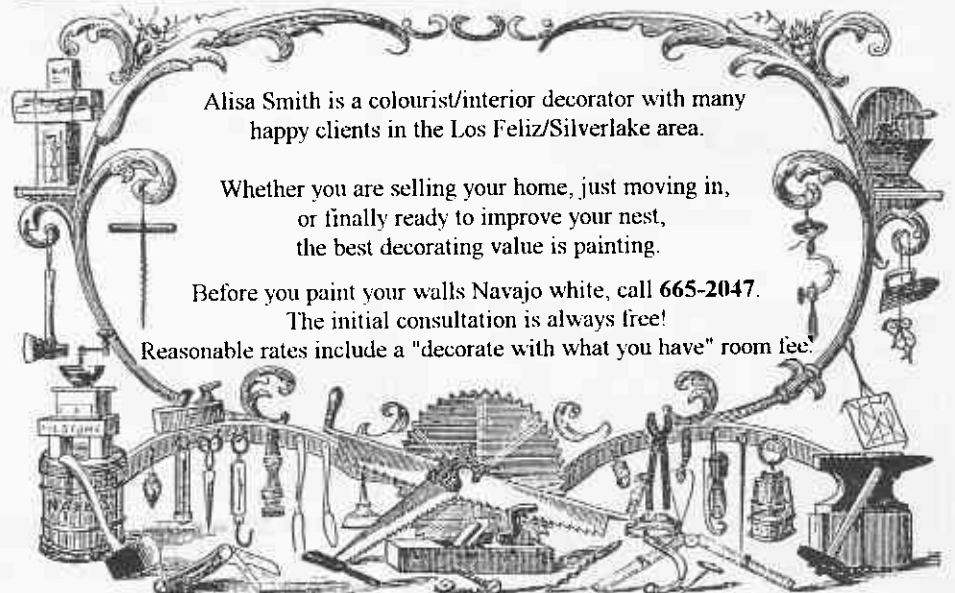
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