



OVERVIEW

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

ISSUE No. 4

FRANKLIN HILLS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 1991

WORLDS OLDEST LIVING LOT SPEAKS (FROM VITAGRAPH TO ABC - Part II)

by ISABEL DIETZ

In February 1925, when Harry Warner purchased the Vitagraph Studios at the corner of Talmadge and Prospect, the Warner brothers were definitely not at the top of the heap of nascent moguls struggling to gain a secure foothold in the movie business. But maybe breathing a little of Vitagraph's magic helped. After all, it was the place where in 1916, D. W. Griffith had filmed "Intolerance," one of the three great pacifist films of the time. (The other two were Thomas Ince's "Civilization" and Lewis Selznick's "War Brides.") The set for the legendary Babylonian sequence of "Intolerance," with its spectacular one hundred-and-fifty-foot towers, had been thrown up on ten acres of land at Sunset and Virgil (now the site of a Von's market), then left there for year. Other parts of the filming were completed on the Prospect-Talmadge lot. Warner knew that grabbing the audience's attention would require something new and different - capturing some technical aspect of movie making, perhaps, for their very own. They chose sound.

Successful attempts to synchronize a recorded voice with an image projected on a screen had been

See LOT, p. 6

**NUMBERS
YOU NEED, p. 5**



Julia Russell leads tour of Eco Home grounds

ECO HOME: ACRES OF DIAMONDS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

by ROSALIND LIEBERMAN

Perhaps you've seen her jogging down your street early in the morning, or pedaling home from the market on her tricycle, the groceries stowed in a cardboard box in back, her hair looped back in a chignon. She's the kind of person who weds herself to a purpose and pursues it with singular determination. Someone whose remarkable accomplishments may, so far, have only been recognized by a few, but to whom we are all indebted and for whom parks are later named. You may have already

visited her house, nestled between fragrant front and rear gardens, surrounded by prolific fruit trees and flowering vines. If not, permit me to

"Economical changes are possible. This is a very exciting time. People are beginning to recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy ecology. And to be sustainable, ecology and economy must go hand in hand." - JULIA RUSSELL

introduce you to our neighbor, Julia Russell, who is well on her way toward becoming a legend, not only in her own time, but in her own place as well.

Julia Russell's place is a modest California-style bungalow on (where else?) Russell Avenue. She welcomes us graciously and we satisfy our curiosity right away.

See ECO, p. 8

In My Opinion:

We are seeing changes down there — City Hall, I mean. The Mayor says the homeowners organizations are having too much clout and tells City Planning they should get on with their work; not spend so much time listening to the Council members and other special interest groups. What's going on? The City Council members are supposed to be responsive to their constituents. Isn't the rest of City government supposed to be, also? The Councilperson for this district, Mike Woo, is responsible for some far-reaching changes through his new Hillside Ordinance, restricting heights and sizes of homes on almost all hillside streets, although, for my taste, it should be considerably stronger, particularly in height restrictions. However, had this new ordinance been in effect in 1988 we would not be burdened with neighborhood debacles like our Ronda Vista tower (see related letter, p. 9.)

We are going to have to be very vigilant in the next few years: Tom Bradley is seemingly a lame duck mayor and he has proven to be very supportive of large scale developers, intensely interested in big housing projects as well as large (empty) office buildings. While our immediate neighborhood seems to be safe with its R-1 (one house/one lot) zoning, there will always be attempts to change this, at least on a lot-to-lot basis. Isn't it sad to feel that our rights are being constantly eroded by some we've elected to represent us?

Maybe we as homeowners and renters really need paid lobbyists to go to City Hall and State Government to represent us against the developers and insurance companies that do not have our best interests at heart. Fortunately, there are some groups that *are* representing our slow-or-no growth stance. The FHRA has just joined the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations (the Hillside Federation), an organization of over 50 associations like ours. The Federation has proven itself over the years and we look forward to a long and happy relationship.

— DON WALDROP, President
Franklin Hills Residents Association

LOS FELIZ HILLS SCHOOL UPDATE

by TONY MICHAELIS

The Los Feliz Hills School is no more. The School was foreclosed upon last month and is now owned by Community Bank and Mega Mortgage. Members of the Association's School Committee have been active on two fronts.

We submitted an application to get the site designated an historical monument by the City's Cultural Heritage Commission. This designation would preclude any demolition of the buildings on the site for up to one year. These initial school buildings were designed by John Lautner, a world-renowned architect who studied under Frank Lloyd Wright. The buildings are uniquely designed to suit children and Mr. Lautner created a "floating slab" foundation in order to work with the site's landfill limitations.

The Commission took the application under consideration and visited the site on August 7th. They were to make a final determination at their September 4th meeting but, based on a agreement between the owners, the L.A. Conservancy (which has been working with us on this application) and this Association, decision was delayed until October 2nd.

This agreement resulted from a request by the new owners for a one month delay to pursue an opportunity which might benefit both our interests. The new owners' plan is to file a legal action against the City.

We believe they are acting in good faith and this effort of theirs may result
See LFHS, p. 11

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VIOLET WEBER

To better serve the community, the FHRA's Board has formed teams to deal with the issues that concern our neighborhood on a day-to-day basis:

ABC-TV/COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Don Waldrop, 664-4124

PLANNING and ZONING

Charley Mims, 665-8239

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:

Violet Weber, 663-6427

RECYCLING /ENVIRONMENTAL:

Marcelle Zonta, 664-4124

LOS FELIZ HILLS SCHOOL:

Tony Michaelis, 666-8166

CRIME/NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH:

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NEWSLETTER:

Don Waldrop, 664-4124

BYLAWS:

Jim Churchill, 663-0580

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Bruce Carroll, 665-9875

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The OVERVIEW invites your comments and, space permitting, will publish letters mailed to Editor, Overview, Box 29122, Los Angeles, CA 90027

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ANNOUNCING A NEW LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT 7-WEEK DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING COURSE

Because of the popularity of last year's course, we are able to offer a NEW 7-WEEK COURSE beginning Tuesday, January 14, 1992. It is very comprehensive and includes Search and Rescue, Medical/First Aid, Fire Suppression and other vital services needed to save lives and property. **Living in Los Angeles means living with the threat of a major earthquake at any time.** Knowing how to cope won't stop an earthquake, but it may save neighborhood lives that could otherwise be lost. Let's make this just as successful as the last one.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CALL: VIOLET WEBER, (213) 663-6427

• SPOTLIGHT • SPOTLIGHT • SPOTLIGHT • SPOTLIGHT • SPOTLIGHT •

MARY ORR

by VIOLET WEBER

Franklin Hill may not number a Madonna or a Michael Jackson tucked away in its leafy heights, but it probably has community activists who have done more for the good of their neighborhood. Mary Orr is one of them.

Mary admittedly came late to activism. Perhaps over-awed by her memorably energetic mother, it took a juvenile crime spree in the neighborhood, in which an elderly woman, harassed by mean-spirited youths, barricaded herself in her home and died in a subsequent fire, to arouse an already irritated group of neighbors. They vowed that it would never happen again and called upon Mary to help.

Mary spearheaded the group, now known as the Franklin Hill Community Patrol and Homeowners' Association. Their early meetings were held at ABC, block captains were appointed and signs, visible all over the Hill, alerted perpetrators that someone is indeed watching them, and crime fell in the area by 13%.

The Police Department was ecstatic, but like all associations, attendance has been difficult to maintain after the initial rush to join.

By dint of regular meetings, interesting speakers, quick response to alert neighbors of any crime going on in the neighborhood, Mary Orr has kept the Community Patrol alive to celebrate its tenth anniversary in August this year, one of the longest cohesive crime watch groups in the City of Los Angeles. Mary is quick to credit the diligence of block captains and Patrol members in keeping the group viable for this length of time.

Mary is as indefatigable in her personal life as she is in trying to right neighborhood wrongs. Born in Des Moines, Iowa, she has attended every alumni reunion

but one when only a knee operation prevented her from driving cross country.

Mary's work background might make her look like a "job hopper" to a prospective employer. Instead it is the basis for bedrock experience that has formed her interest and successes in civic endeavors. A stint as a liaison between the Department of Motor Vehicles and car dealers, and subsequent insurance investigation for the DMV gave her an extensive background when, as a member of the Westside Action Coalition, she joined others in the fight to lower auto and other insurance rates with the eventual passage of Proposition 103.

Her work with auto dealers led to employment with Hertz Company and eventually to her ownership of a used car lot and garage. Her knowledge of automobiles is formidable but she hasn't yet figured out how to keep the local vandals from breaking into her car parked in front of her own home. Even a leader of the Crime Watch can be frustrated sometimes.

Another interesting facet of Mary's work experience was with the Department of the Treasury in the printing department. Learning the care with which money is printed in order to foil criminals

was perhaps her introduction to her interest in crime. Don't try to pass any hundred dollar bills off on Mary!

She has been tenacious in helping improve the lot of her neighborhood in other ways than prevention of crime. As any activist knows, tangling with the bureaucratic community is a lesson in patience at best. A recent case was getting a variance denied on Cumberland Avenue. This culminated in victory, but only after three and a half years of trying to get our elected officials to act on an illegal property use.

New street lights on the Hyperion side of Franklin Hill can be attributed directly to Mary's persistence in getting the



LIBRARY FOOTBALL

by BRUCE CARROLL

Franklin Hills and Los Feliz residents appear to have won the Library Bowl, played in the tough PFL (Political Football League). The Save Our Library Coalition team has scored big, with the City's Library Commission staff now recommending the southeast corner of Franklin and Hillhurst for the new Los Feliz Branch Library.

All summer long, the site issue was passed back and forth between the Board of Library Commissioners and the Department of Recreation and Parks, owner of the alternate site, Barnsdall Park.

Cultural Affairs General Manager Al Nodal kicked off the game with his suggestion that Recreation and Parks give away land at Barnsdall Park for the new library. Bond funds for both land and building were approved by voters in 1989. Councilman Mike Woo tried to cheer the Barnsdall team to quick victory with the cry of FREE LAND!! in his June 22nd letter to the Library Commission: "The city will save an amount between \$1,900,000 and \$2,400,000 . . ."

But Save Our Library Coalition coach, Donna Matson, wrote up an impressive game plan. It gave the Parks Commissioners 18 reasons not to move the library into their Park. The report cited everything from City Charter prohibitions, to restrictions included in Aline Barnsdall's 1926 deed, to more recent safety and traffic concerns. Ms. Matson's 25-member team, representing FHRA and other community organizations, tried to block the plan on June 24th at the Recreation and Parks Commission meeting. Despite a spirited defense and a powerful recommendation against the Barnsdall

site from their own general manager, the Recreation and Parks Commission voted to: "explore the possibility."

The second quarter was played at the July 3rd Library Commission meeting. Ms. Matson enlisted City Council President John Ferraro, who represents much of the Los Feliz area, as Hillhurst's top cheerleader. His July 1st letter to the Library Commission proclaimed, "A Los Feliz location is the most practical and viable, both physically and financially." After tackling the pros and cons for a while, the Library Commissioners voted to huddle with Parks Commissioners to see if they'd really let them run unopposed through 1,167 square yards of park land.

In the third quarter, the Barnsdall team got thrown for a big loss. On August 12th, the Parks Commission told the Library Commission they could play in Barnsdall Park, but not for free, "The price would be predicated on the fair market value." The site at Hillhurst and Franklin was valued at \$1.5 million in May. The park land would surely be worth more and its hilly terrain would boost building costs.

In September, to forestall defeat, Councilman Woo requested a last-ditch 30-day timeout to conjure up a Two Library play. Perhaps the old "where's the library fake" could hoodwink MetroRail into building an Arts library in Barnsdall Park, in exchange for using the park to tunnel under Hollywood for five years. The library Commissioners voted 3-2 not to blow the whistle on Woo's delay of game — one last time. So, just inches from the goal, it appears the Hillhurst and Franklin site will finally win the contest next month.

THE NEW HILLSIDE ORDINANCE

(In the works)

FROM THE HILLSIDE FEDERATION:

Due to some misinformation disseminated by a small group of builders and developers who hope desperately to defeat this ordinance, many homeowners became worried and upset. For the record, here are some facts:

1. If you add on to your house, only the new portion has to be set back from the street by 5 feet. (No one would have to tear down part of their house to add on.)

2. The new ordinance does not require a 36-foot-wide street dedication — it only refers to 36 feet in the definition section of the ordinance. It actually states that improvements will be based on the standard Bureau of Engineering specifications (which are governed by the width of the existing dedication.)

3. Homeowners will not have to widen the street beyond their property line. If your street is 25 feet wide it does not

have to be widened to 36 feet.

4. There is nothing in the new ordinance about liability to future buyers for failure to disclose information. Existing real estate laws require full disclosure of faults, defects and bootleg work by the seller to the buyer. Knowledge of local laws, school districts and so forth are the responsibility of the buyer. Liens and CC&Rs are usually covered by the title report.

The new ordinance is designed to protect homeowners from the side effects of further uncontrolled development in the hills. It takes the sensible approach of requiring builders to provide incremental improvements to the street as well as ensuring that adequate parking is provided so as to prevent further congestion.

SEE HILLSIDE, p. 16