



Established 1971 To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach

January

newsletter 2012

First Meeting of 2012 Set for January 23

At our first general meeting of the new year, we'll enjoy a potluck supper and then spend an hour or so taking stock of the year just ended, looking ahead to the immediate future, and examining the budget committee's proposal for 2012. We'll meet at Ginger Osborne's, 31651 Santa Rosa Drive, at 6 p.m. Please bring your favorite dish (for six).

Council Assesses Progress on Climate Protection

Ginger Osborne attended the January 10 Council meeting on our behalf to congratulate Councilmembers for the measures the City has taken to meet its commitment to the U.S. Mayor's Agreement on Climate Change. The staff's summary included a number of energy-saving improvements to city facilities and vehicles, the adoption of the Green Building Code, and the incorporation of conservation policies into the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the design review criteria. Village Laguna encouraged Councilmembers to investigate the potential for solar power at City Hall and the Senior/Community Center, remote parking, and expanded use of recycled water, to talk with the school board about reducing the number of trips in private cars to and from the city's schools, and to develop a proxy measure for carbon emissions that will give residents some idea of how well we're doing in trying to slow global warming. The Council approved

the development of a Sustainability Element for the General Plan, and it seems likely that good ideas will emerge from that effort.

Bluebird Canyon Trees Win a Reprieve



Back in October, when the City Council agreed to allow Southern California Edison to remove five historical eucalyptus trees in Bluebird Canyon that it considered a potential threat to its power lines, residents argued (as did Councilmember Verna Rollinger, who voted no) that the decision should have been postponed until an arborist's assessment of the stability of the trees could be obtained. Canyon neighbors who valued the trees got together, hired an arborist (who recommended pruning the trees instead), and then got the Council to

January General Meeting

Monday, January 23, 6 p.m.
Home of Ginger Osborne
31651 Santa Rosa Drive

February Board Meeting

Saturday, February 4, 9 a.m.
Home of Barbara Metzger
2669 Nido Way

revisit its earlier decision. At the December 6 meeting, Edison's representative announced that, in the light of the arborist's findings, the company would like to prune rather than remove the trees, and the Council approved the proposal unanimously. In the course of the discussion, City Manager John Pietig suggested that a hazard assessment of all the City's trees might be considered when the 2012–2013 budget is developed in the spring. The trees were pruned over the holidays.

Coastal Commission Certifies New Land Use Element

The revised Land Use Element of the General Plan, the product of years of work by the Planning Commission, City staff, and interested residents, was certified by the Coastal Commission on December 7. What was noteworthy about the event was that City and Coastal staff, meeting both here and in the commission's Long Beach offices, had resolved their differences over the details of the document in advance of the hearing, with the result that City staff went to San Francisco with direction to accept the changes suggested. This and the earlier successful negotiations over the lifeguard headquarters on Main Beach may signal a new era of cooperation between the City and the Coastal Commission that will benefit all parties.

Aliso Creek Pollutants Show Downward Trend

The annual report of OC Watersheds, the county-and-cities agency that oversees the water quality in our local creeks, indicates that both the discharge rate and the pollutant content of Aliso Creek are less this year than last.

City Excels at Recycling

Michelle Clark, community relations manager for Waste Management, reported to the City Council at its November 15 meeting that the City is now recycling 71% of its trash and that 440 out of 557 businesses in town are participating in the recycling program—the best record in the county. All of Waste Management's vehicles now run on natural gas.

Heritage Committee Establishes Guidelines for Mills Act Reviews

The Heritage Committee, which advises the Design Review Board and the City Council on matters of historic preservation, has spent the past year developing a new set

of guidelines for reviewing applications for property tax relief under the Mills Act for restoring and maintaining historic properties. The processing of applications for all but E (Exceptional)-rated structures was suspended in the interim. The new guidelines, which are expected to be presented to the Council next month, include an annual deadline of April 30 for applications for the following tax year and the ranking of applications in terms of a checklist of features that contribute to the structure's historic value. An annual report showing that the work described in the ten-year maintenance plan has been performed will be required of participants in the Mills Act agreements.

Village Laguna Mourns Longtime Volunteer Nancy Baker

by Charlotte Masarik

Nancy Baker passed away on New Year's Day. The Village Laguna board and all her Charm House volunteers are saddened by her passing. As head hosts for a Charm House for more than 15 years, Nancy and her husband, George Alexander, could be relied upon for the perfect pitch of efficiency, responsibility, and leisureliness, making all our patrons equally comfortable and relaxed. One year, Nancy and George were hosting the historic Kodiak house on Sunset, and they were running a little late. The first bus full of patrons arrived right at noon, while Nancy and George were still eating donuts and visiting over coffee with their gang. With not a moment's hesitation, Nancy invited the busload into the house and started cutting up donuts in quarters and asking people if they would like coffee too. That's who she was. She could turn on a dime. We shall all miss her efficient but sweet and calm nature and the twinkle in her eye. She had a wicked sense of humor and never let anyone give her a hard time--truly the teacher in her and something for us to all learn from. We thank her for her years of devotion to Village Laguna and the Charm House Tour and will miss her immensely. Our hearts go out to George and to her family. Donations in her memory may be sent to Animal Crackers.

Renew Your Membership Now!

If your mailing label still says 1/1/12 or earlier, it's time to renew your membership, using the coupon and the attached envelope. If you haven't done so already, please consider providing your e-mail address so that we can get in touch with you between newsletters when special circumstances warrant it.



Village Voices

by Arnold Hano

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, and I murmur my amen, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends upon the unreasonable man."

Or woman.

When I finished speaking to a Laguna Historical Society meeting a few weeks ago, I was asked who had been my heroes. I flubbed the question. I muttered something incoherent and went home, and the next day I thought of an answer. First, I thought of the unreasonable Jim Dilley and the slightly more reasonable Bob Gentry. Each man created extraordinary change. Dilley persuaded wealthy landowners to give him land. Pretty soon we had our Greenbelt. Unbelievable. Gentry became the first avowedly gay mayor in California. He opened closets for gays, and our minds to fair play. I don't know how each man did it. Presto! They changed our world. Yet I somehow don't think of either man as my hero. Silently, almost unaware I found myself thinking of another person. Mary Gray.

Who, you may ask, was Mary Gray? An unreasonable person, a marvelous person, a mover of the world in quiet ways.

Mary Gray spanned virtually our past century. Born in 1901, she died in 1991, a day short of her ninetieth birthday. She and her husband, Fitzhugh Gray, owned the house just south of Treasure Island, having purchased a coastal lot with 250 feet of ocean front for a paltry \$6,000 shortly after Pearl Harbor Day. The fear of Japanese submarines shelling California shores sharply drove down the cost of such lots.

Mary worked part-time as a social worker; her clients were senior citizens, most of whom were years younger than she. So far nothing particularly unreasonable.

Mary and Fitzhugh entertained; they built fire pits on the sand below, and we all ate burgers and hot dogs. And we drank martinis. This was county, not city, so an occasional deputy sheriff would wander by and cluck at us for having alcohol on the beach. So we'd invite him to join us. Which he did. Son Edward would strip abalone shells from barnacled rocks and Mary would pound the meat tender, and we ate abalone steaks 20 minutes old. Still, nothing unreasonable. Nothing heroic.

But something else was going on in that house that I knew nothing of. Bonnie knew, but then women confide in women and men are left guessing. This is what distinguished

Mary from others. Pregnant young women would go down to Mexico for their back-room butchershop abortions. Abortion was illegal in the States. So girls, some as young as sixteen, would be driven across the border, undergo their procedures, and then be told to leave. The no-longer pregnant girls, bruised and perhaps still bleeding, would be driven some 80 miles to the Gray house. Mary would take in these wounded children. Give them a clean bed. Tend to them. Feed them. Nurse them back to health. Replace guilt and shame with a sense of worth. Somebody had cared. When they were able to do so, they would leave, for home or wherever.

Like the houses that harbored runaway slaves during the Civil War, this house on Coast Highway was a station on an underground railway. Here Mary Gray changed the lives of these wounded young. She set them free of the bondage of victimhood. She gave them a better world. An unreasonable woman, Mary Gray. My hero.

Join us or renew your membership!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone number _____ Email _____

I have enclosed my check for the following membership (I understand the amount is not tax-deductible):

- Basic - \$45/family, \$25/individual
- Supporter - \$120 per family (includes 2 t-shirts)
- Sustainer - \$240 per family (includes 2 Charm House Tour tickets and 2 t-shirts)

Contact Treasurer Richard Picheny at 499-0505 or rpicheny@gmail.com to arrange for automatic monthly or quarterly payments.

Mail to Village Laguna, PO Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652



P.O. Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

My Favorite Local Business

by Darrylin Girvin

“I’d like to order two barbecued chicken quesadillas. . .”

“One with no chipotle, Mrs. Boyd?”

So it goes when I call the downtown La Sirena Grill at 347 Mermaid Street. Obviously the friendly



people in this tiny gem know us well. Several have worked with owner Scott Cortellessa ever since the original restaurant opened here, nearly thirteen years ago. (The South Laguna La Sirena in the Aliso Creek Shopping Center has recently expanded to include more indoor seating—and it serves microbrewed beers! Two others are located in Irvine and El Segundo.)

Everything La Sirena serves is as fresh and delicious and healthy as you can get. Insofar as possible they use sustainable, “green,” and organic products and packaging, buy seasonally and locally, and label their dishes accordingly. Great food just two minutes from home or a picnic on the beach.

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