



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

newsletter

May 2010

Tickets Still Available for Charm House Tour, May 16

Tickets for this year's Charm House Tour at \$40 may still be purchased from our web site (<http://www.villagelaguna.org>), by mail (P.O. Box 1309, Laguna Beach 92652), or at Coast Pet Supplies, La Casa del Camino, Laguna Books, Copy & Print Center, Monarch Bay Optometry, Fawn Memories, Rock Martin Custom Jewelry, Laguna Nursery, Silver Images, Gay Mart, and the Hotel Laguna. The tour will begin at the Festival of Arts grounds at noon, and the last bus will leave there at 3 p.m. Refreshments will be served at the end of the tour in the rose garden of Laguna Presbyterian Church, where participants may choose to take a brief separate tour conducted (free of charge) by church members of their newly restored historic structure. Descriptions and glimpses of the five houses on the program (photos by Rik Lawrence) appear below and on page 2.

Maison des Lunes



Remodeled just last year, this 1930 home, in a neighborhood designed by the landscape architect and early Laguna resident Florence Yoch, combines traditional sophistication and contemporary accents. The turn-of-the century grand piano was rescued from the fire that destroyed Santa Barbara's Fox Arlington hotel. A "chain of title" in the entry lists the previous owners of the property since the original Mexican land grant of the 1880s.

Brayton-Eschbach Home



Built in 1989 for Durlin Brayton, creator of Laguna's internationally renowned Brayton Pottery, this stucco and ornamental-brick house was remodeled in 2009, opening up the interior and painting the once dark woodwork white. The fireplace, windows, and white-oak floors are original. Old French pavers in the dining room lead to the patio and pool. Jack Eschbach, founder of Eschbach Florist, once lived in and loved this home.

Charm House Tour

Sunday, May 16, noon
Buses from Festival Grounds

June Board Meeting

Saturday, June 5, 9 a.m.
Home of John Monahan
354 Flora Street

Commission to Revisit Downtown Specific Plan

Kelly Boyd, citing concerns expressed by Planning Commissioners themselves and others, has asked the Council to expedite a reexamination of the Downtown Specific Plan, and Council members agreed to put the topic on the agenda for a joint meeting with the Commission on Saturday, May 8. Boyd's list of concerns included (1) the growing number of vacant stores in the downtown and elsewhere in the city; (2) the lack of anchor stores to draw in customers to various areas of the downtown; (3) the inability of property owners to add a second story to their one-story buildings even though many of the buildings in the downtown are already two-story; (4) the impracticality of parking requirements based on individual buildings; and (4) the lack of resident-serving businesses despite the permit process that is in place. He suggested that the forthcoming report of the Business Task Force might be a major factor in considering revisions to the plan.

The height limit that prohibits new second stories in much of the downtown is a perennial issue, and the last time it was discussed by the Council (in May 2008) the consensus was that it should remain unchanged. The argument for the limit from the beginning has been that the diversity of structures is part of the charm of our downtown and that if new second stories were permitted the profile of the downtown would quickly lose that diversity.

Save the Whale Rally Scheduled for May 23

A rally will be held at 10 a.m. on Sunday, May 23, on the cobblestone area of Main Beach to protest a proposal before the International Whaling Commission that would lift the current moratorium on commercial hunting of whales. Volunteers will be gathering signatures on a petition to the president asking him to keep his promise to oppose whaling and to direct the U.S. delegation to the IWC to support continuation of the moratorium. For information, contact <http://www.wanconservancy.org/whales/>.

The Beach Loft



This new house combines the character of a Laguna Beach cottage with the style of a New York loft, an “East Meets West” design of local architect Mark Abel. The child-friendly downstairs with painted concrete floor provides ample room for active play. The airy loft master bedroom, with fireplace and balcony, has the feel of a tree house.

La Palette



The colors of Provence flow through this chic beach cottage, built by the actress Bette Davis for her mother in 1939. Architect Lance Polster and contractor Mark Walpin have enlarged rooms and added creative structural elements including the vaulted ceilings. A secluded patio and jacuzzi are off the master suite. Plein-air paintings by the owner and other local artists adorn the walls.

Gardener's Muse



This California Craftsman-style home, designed by Greg Abel, has stained concrete floors, etched windows, and toned and textured walls that add to its authenticity and warmth. The furnishings include a striking silk chandelier and an eclectic collection of paintings. In the garden, cymbidiums, ferns, and Japanese maples create a shady spot for relaxing and dining outdoors, and water flows from a Thai Buddha into a tiny koi pond.

Short-Term Lodging Units Under City Scrutiny

According to a 1997 ordinance, property owners in virtually every zone in the city may rent their houses or apartments out on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis with an administrative use permit from the Director of Community Development. The application process includes payment of a fee, noticing of the neighbors within a 300-foot radius, and, if anyone asks for it, a hearing before the director. The director may reject a particular request if there is serious neighborhood opposition, and either the applicant or the neighbor may appeal to the City Council. While the permit runs with the land, the ordinance creating it specifically considers the possibility of revocation for cause.

The unusual frequency of notices about these applications in our mailboxes in recent months reflects a major enforcement effort. Vacation rentals are readily identifiable on the Internet, where property owners advertise their prices and their amenities. (A single web site consulted the other day listed 63 houses and apartments, renting for anywhere from \$100 [more commonly \$350–400] to \$1,000 a night.) These rentals are subject, just like hotels, to the bed tax that helps the City pay the costs of providing for out-of-town visitors.



Village Voices

by *Arnold Hano*

Fran Engelhardt never received the press she deserved for starting the Village Laguna

Charm House Tour.

It all began, in 1973, over a ladies' lunch. The idea was that Village Laguna could sponsor a tour that would show off some of the best of Laguna's residences and make a few bucks in the bargain. When the notion took root, Fran made it her own special project. She helped find the houses. When a potential house owner said no, she smiled and kept talking, and eventually the owner said yes. Fran could talk. She put up signs, not just in the downtown windows but on the road, with directional arrows pointing motorists to the houses. She decided that we'd price the tickets at \$2.50. We had no idea whether that was too little or too much. Four hundred people came; I guess it was too little. (The next year, we charged \$3.00, and 800 people came.)

We posted a couple of volunteers in each house to make sure nobody fell down the stairs. Now we have more than a dozen volunteers per house—an army recruited and trained by

Charlotte Masarik. Nobody has fallen yet. (We carry plenty of insurance for the day, just in case.)

Of course, Fran did not do it all alone. Evelyn Munro wrote the press releases back then. Kathy Jones designed the posters and the tickets; we've used that design ever since. The local papers got behind the tour. Today the Charm House Tour is a tradition. Fran set the standard.

Bonnie and I had our house on that first tour. It was a Lamont Langworthy house atop Bluebird Canyon, built on an alarming slope. When we commissioned Lamont he sat a full day on the lot with a sketch pad and a bottle of wine. When he had finished sketching and drinking, he had a rendition of the house that was exactly what it became. The hundreds of people that trooped through it and the other houses on the tour oohed and ahed and murmured their praise and left not a single fingerprint behind.

Today people can't drive the tour; we provide bus transportation. Before a house is nailed down as a sure choice, Johanna Felder meets with the bus people to determine whether a bus can navigate a tricky turn. If it can't do it safely, that house is not considered. Tours alternate locations: one year all the houses will be north of Broadway and the next year south of Broadway. This year the tour will

be in the central village.

The tour has grown since those early festive days. Perhaps 200 volunteers, under chair Anne Caenn, will be involved. Our clients expect the best. We provide it. Architects love having their houses on the tour. It lends a certain cachet. After this year's houses had been selected, one architect phoned us asking to have two of his houses included. Sorry, pal, too late.

Each year we serve refreshments along the way, with cookies, lemonade, and coffee prepared by volunteers. This year it will be in the rose garden of the Presbyterian Church. And when the tour is over, we will congratulate ourselves and honor the volunteers and, in particular, the owners of the houses we have featured. I hope somebody will think of how it all began.

The tour this year takes place, as always, on the Sunday after Mother's Day. Fran won't be around. Cancer struck her down decades ago, much too soon. I believe she would have loved this year's tour, but I think she might have been a bit befuddled by the need for so many people to do what she did virtually by herself. No matter. We thank her for what she started. My memory and Bonnie's is of Fran running up a road, directional arrows in her hand, with a big smile on her face.

Join us or renew your membership!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone number _____ Email _____

I have enclosed my check for the following membership:

- 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

El Moro Campground Work Under Way Again

One of the few projects in the state park system that is up and running again after being frozen last year, construction of the campground at the mouth of El Moro



canyon is making real progress. The Friends of the Newport Coast newsletter reports that the work is expected to be finished by the end of the year. With 200 parking spaces, the beach will be open for day use for the first time in many years. There will also be 60 campsites (half of them reserved for low-impact camping), picnic areas, an amphitheater, and habitat and beach restoration. A berm with native vegetation will separate the park from the school grounds. A bioswale will treat surface runoff before it goes into the ocean. There will be no crosswalks or lights at the highway; pedestrians will use the existing tunnel. The \$12.1 million cost of all this is being borne by voted-approved park bonds.

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Web site: www.villagelaguna.org

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