

Benedict Canyon

Summer 2002

Benedict Canyon Association Newsletter

Volume IV Issue 5

Benedict Canyon Remembers BERNICE BROWN

.....former First Lady of California and longtime Canyon resident

By

Sascha Rice and Barbara Marcus

Benedict Canyon lost one of its most renowned residents last May with the passing of Bernice Brown. Bernice Layne Brown was First Lady of California for eight years — 1959 - 1966. Wife of the 32nd governor (Pat Brown), mother of the 34th governor (Jerry Brown) and of the former state treasurer (Kathleen Brown), Bernice Brown spent most of her adult life in the public eye. One of five children of a San Francisco police captain and his wife, Bernice was a true daughter of California. Her great grandfather, Giovanni Baptiste Cuneo, came to the Sierra gold fields from Italy. He operated a bustling general store- his sturdy stone building still stands in Vallecito- that outfitted miners.

The Laynes came from England, and after stops in Mississippi and Texas, settled in California. Historians of the San Francisco Police Department describe her father, Captain Arthur Layne, as a resolutely honest and



BERNICE BROWN

effective officer at a time when those qualities did not characterize the force.

As a 14-year-old junior at Lowell High School, she met a boisterous and ebullient Irish lad who was a “yell leader.” She later recalled: “I should have been forewarned. He was in politics. He ran for all kinds of offices.”

She went off to the University

of California at Berkeley, commuting daily by streetcar, ferry, and bus to reach the campus. Graduating at 19, she became a teacher, one of the few professions open to women at that time.

At age 21, she eloped to Reno with the former “yell leader,” Edmund G. “Pat” Brown, who never went to college but had a degree from a night law school. She later lamented getting married on October 30. “If I had known then that my husband was going into politics, I would never have gotten married so close to election day.” Many of their anniversaries were sacrificed to the imperatives of political campaigns.

He campaigned. She raised four children. And in 1959 they moved into the historic Governor’s Mansion on H Street in the capitol. In spite of demonstrators at the doorsteps, rats in the walls and the steady hum of interstate traffic just outside the windows, she turned the mansion into a gracious and wel-

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KEEP YOUR EYE OPEN FOR. . . .

. . . EARTHQUAKE ALERT: AVOID AN EXPLOSION

Everyone knows this is earthquake country. That's no surprise. Everyone also knows that damage caused by an earthquake can be devastating. Most of us have lived through earthquakes in Los Angeles, and some of us are still recounting tales of their effects many years after the fact. Most of us already know that we should be prepared to survive a disaster for up to 72 hours or longer. We know this means we must be able to rely on our own resources for food, water, first aid and shelter. Some of us feel a little guilty about not having a survival kit at home and in our cars. However, many of us may not know about a simple device that could save our home and family in the event of an earthquake. This device is an **earthquake emergency gas shut off valve**. Even if you already have a wrench attached to your gas line and know how to operate it, it will be useless if you are asleep, not at home or damage prevents access to your gas meter when an earthquake strikes.

Although it is still impossible to predict earthquakes accurately scientists agree that along the west coast we are at risk for earthquakes everyday. Natural gas presents two kinds of hazards. It is an asphyxiant, meaning that it robs the body of oxygen, and it is explosive. Leaking gas can easily be ignited, causing an explosion and subsequent fires. Installing an automatic gas shut off valve is the best way to reduce natural gas hazards in the

case of an earthquake. We need to protect ourselves in advance as much as possible. The automatic shut off valve is one way to do this.

Encourage your neighbor to install one also, as your house is no safer than the burning structure next door. It's relatively inexpensive, can be installed easily by a plumber, and may one day save your home, family and pets or the entire Canyon.

Vera Dunn

. . . IN HOME DANGER

The American Association of Poison Control Centers recently launched a national toll-free telephone hotline for poison emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week-(800) 222-1222.

The poison center can answer questions about household products, chemicals at work or in the environment, drugs, snake bites, spider bites, plants and mushrooms. More than 70% of poisonings are preventable. Residents can also call the poison hotline for poison prevention information. Having the poison emergency number handy can save a life.

Sandy Margolis

. . . LET'S GO FOR A WALK!

Some of your neighbors would love to start a walking group in and around the Benedict Canyon area, and we invite you and your family to join us. We are blessed with lots of interesting and enjoyable walks, routes and trails nearby, both in the

hills of Beverly or in the flats. Join us weekends in exploring FRANKLIN PARK, with its 3-acre duck pond, lake and picnic area, and many self-guided loop nature trails, where signs along the way identify native shrubs and trees.

The kids will also love the WODOC NATURE CENTER, where many local plant and animal species are on display. We can explore Coldwater Canyon's TREE PEOPLE TRAIL, stroll our beautiful Beverly Hills neighborhoods or even walk into town.

For details, call the Hotline at 310-553-4222.

Barbara Marcus

. . . FIRE SEASON HAS ARRIVED

- Do you know where your fire hydrant is located?
- Is your fire hydrant's location indicated by reflective blue "Botz Dots" on the street?
- Is the hydrant unable to be seen easily because it is covered by foliage?
- Is your fire hydrant in need of a new coat of paint?

Your Benedict Canyon Association is collecting locations of any fire hydrants that need attention. If you do not know where your fire hydrant is located the Association can help you find it.

This fire season portends to be one of the worst in many years.

Let's help our courageous fire fighters easily spot our hydrants in the event of a canyon fire.

Please respond by e-mail to jmhammerman@yahoo.com, or by fax to 310-275-0542

17,500 CARS A DAY.....

By Chick Harris

Give or take a few hundred, that's how many cars go through Benedict Canyon every weekday. Almost 12,000 vehicles come and go using upper Benedict Canyon. The remainder use Deep Canyon to Hutton Drive. Some of them are us, but as we know, most of them are daily commuters crossing our neighborhood to get to work and home.

While we consider our streets to be residential, Benedict Canyon is considered a "secondary road" by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT) and all streets connecting to Benedict Canyon are "feeder streets". These definitions have implications relative to what can or cannot be done regarding controlling traffic. The DOT has, among other responsibilities, the movement of traffic throughout Los Angeles. Moving commuters to and from the Valley as quickly and safely as possible is a prime directive. The DOT is also the organization that we look to for implanting "traffic-calming" measures such as the slowing of traffic or its diversion from one area to another. In some cases, like our

Canyon, these responsibilities are in conflict.

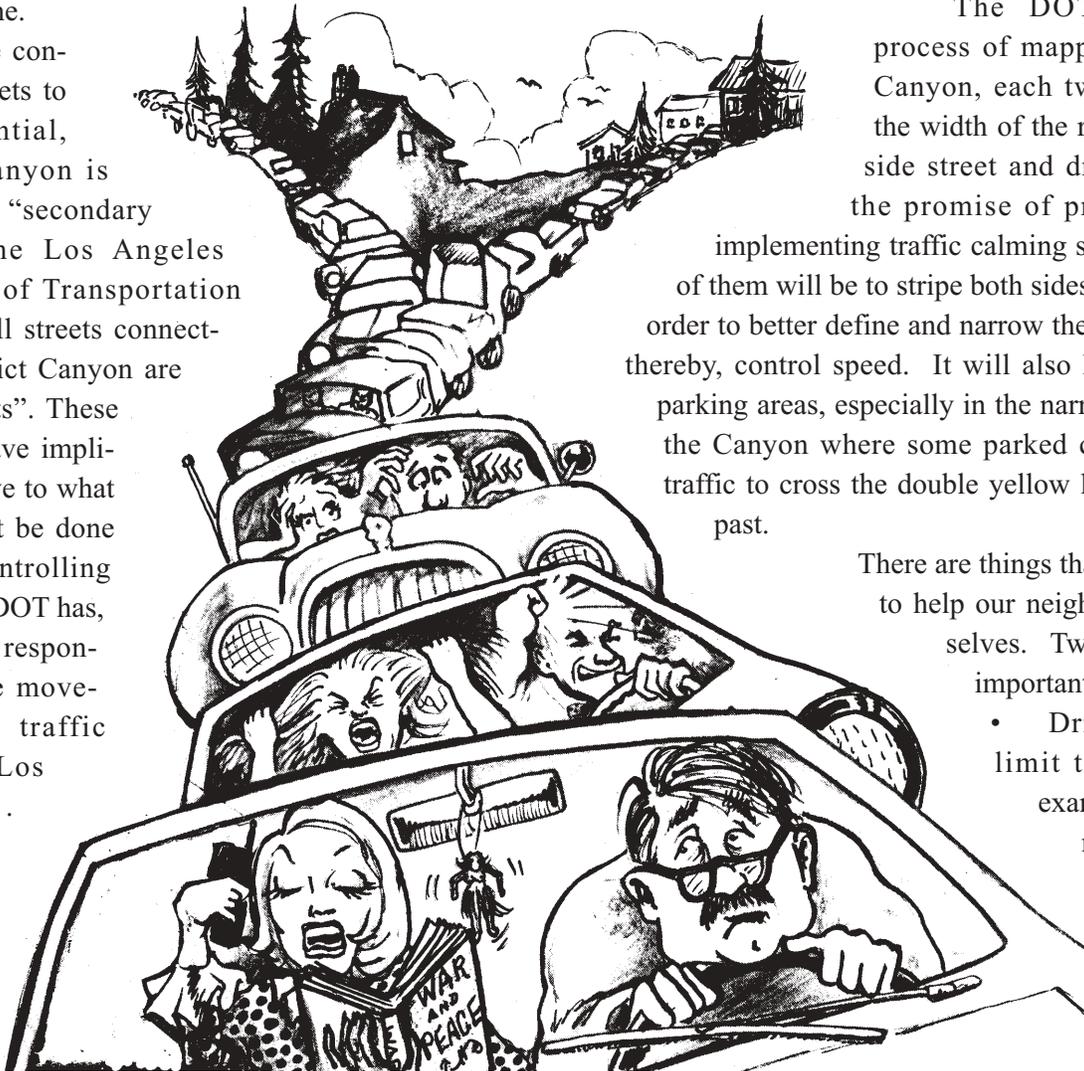
Wouldn't it be great if we could change the basic Rule of the Road to give the right-of-way to cars coming out of driveways and side streets rather than to thru traffic? Wouldn't it be helpful if we could put in stop signs and traffic lights to slow the flow significantly enough to discourage commuter traffic?

The DOT is in the process of mapping Benedict Canyon, each twist and turn, the width of the road and every side street and driveway, with the promise of proposing and implementing traffic calming solutions. One of them will be to stripe both sides of the road in order to better define and narrow the roadway and, thereby, control speed. It will also help to define parking areas, especially in the narrowest parts of the Canyon where some parked cars cause the traffic to cross the double yellow line just to get past.

There are things that we could do to help our neighbors and ourselves. Two of the most important are:

- Drive the speed limit to set a good example for commuters.
- Stop and let your neighbors in and out of their driveways and streets

As we learn more about the DOT's plans we will schedule a community meeting devoted solely to traffic and invite representatives from all appropriate governmental agencies to participate.



Gabrieleños the Native Indians of Benedict Canyon

By Susan Moses

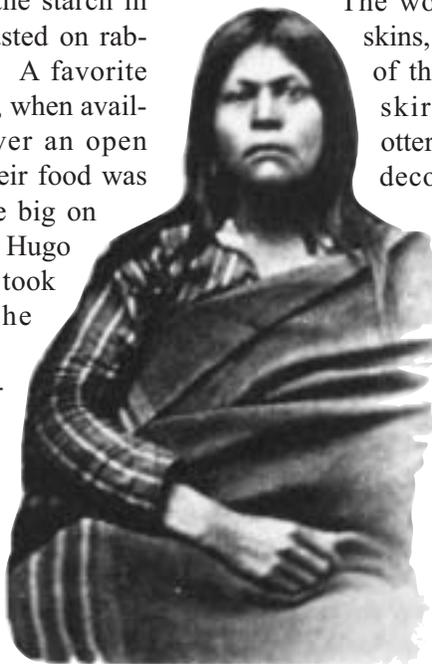
To the Gabrielino Indians, the now crowded and traffic-jammed canyons of Los Angeles, a rare combination of mountain range and urban area, must have been a “paradise on earth”. Known to be friendly and welcoming, they were the first settlers of the canyons, including among them our own Benedict Canyon. They lived in continually changing small bands moving between the different valleys and used the dynamic landscape as inland villages. In 1769, when Gaspar de Portolá’s expedition pitched camp near a village of Gabrielinos, fifty-two of them came to the camp, and their chief, using sign language, invited Portolá’s men to live with them and told them that they would make houses for them and provide them with food. Acorn meal provided the starch in their diet, and they feasted on rabbits, deer and lizards. A favorite appetizer, grasshoppers, when available, were roasted over an open fire, though most of their food was eaten cold. They were big on hygiene and as rancher Hugo Reid observed, “They took all their teeth to the grave”.

Unlike the inhabitants of today, they fabricated nothing permanent. The Gabrielinos left behind only beautiful rock paintings, tracings of villages, and burial sites. They were generally peace-

ful hunters and gatherers respectful of the humble poetry of the land. In contrast, today, our structures belie their reverent notions with a steadfast assault. The former pride of place for generations of Gabrielinos has become a concrete-filled bit of nature.

Modern Angelinos would find it hard to be edified by the Gabrielinos way of life, but their fashion sense left us with much fodder for today’s designers. Far from democratic, they maintained a rigid caste system. They lived in cylindrical, single-family dirt-floor huts, tented and draped with thatched shrubbery. The men generally went around nude, though some of the upper class wore animal-skin cloaks, bound by a bone.

The women wore rabbit skins, while the women of the elite class wore skirts made of sea-otter pelts or buckskin decorated with beads or fringes. Necklaces were made of flowers and beads of shell or stone. In addition, men and women used cactus thorns to pierce their earlobes, from which the men hung cane tubes, which carried



tobacco. The women’s earrings were elaborate confections of feathers and shells. Both genders sported facial and body tattoos — used to indicate high rank in some societies, rebellion and low status in others. Curiously, the practice is a major fascination of this generation’s cyber-surfing youth, illustrating the importance of cultural messages: a commitment to some group, an emblem of a rite of passage, even a fashion statement.

“People and land interact here to create a distinctive place and the healthy future of our canyon depends on its people—on our capacity for reverence, vision, compromise, and concern.”

Many of their people were incorporated into the Mission San Gabriel, hence the name. The missions were essentially obsolete, after Mexico declared its independence from Spain, leaving thousands of Gabrielinos “emancipated” into a world of *rancheros*, where the workers outnumbered the need. Moreover, if such a thing can be imagined, American explorers, slipping in from the Sierras, had a reputation for treating the natives even more unsympathetically than the Spanish. Fleeing north, they vanished. And so, from the founding of the San Gabriel Mission in 1771 to California’s statehood in 1850 the almost complete decimation of a civilization dating back at least two millennia was carried out. Common was the interbreeding between the Gabrielinos and their neighbors, the Chumash, but the mothers strangled the offspring of those who bred with non-Indians. None are alive today.

IN MY CANYON VIEW

By Susan Moses

Benedict Canyon surpassed the Gabrielinos simple notion of beauty, I am sure. Instead, they left it to our generation to subjugate our canyon communities to the artifice of ambition and greed. Today the canyon exposes an urban psychology: a landscape where improper land-use regulations create incongruities, which terminate in a fight for space between nature, wildlife, and the trails of humanity. Taken for granted, in this day and age, the canyons exist as one of Los Angeles' most under-appreciated and ill-used treasures.

To hike along the canyons, to sleep beneath the glittering stars, and to look to a horizon free of concrete retaining walls — these are powerful experiences that free us from our everyday minutiae and release the creative spirit of our imaginations. Maybe we should consider using the canyons to build tent-like structures, day retreats, shrines, nature palaces? The concept is as forward and progressive as any, and the celluloid-loving land barons of this place would all like to think that they were first on this frontier. Who knows, who can tell for sure, is “the retreat in the city” the next big obsession? Probably, because there is a need, and it does not exist yet. A noble start would be the legislation of protected zone land-use laws in the canyons—whereby structures are required to be completely sensitive to the land, blend into their surroundings and not compete.

The canyons provide us with important perspectives. Commuters travel them like major freeways, while hikers pause to watch a red-shouldered hawk bank in the air, and coyotes roam them for their last meal before turning in for the day. People and land interact here to create a distinctive place and the healthy future of our canyon depends on its people — on our capacity for reverence, vision, compromise, and concern. Once, the canyons showed their indifference to the land-respecting Gabrielino — a people who believed the Earth was carried on the shoulders of seven giants, who caused an earthquake when one shifted position. I can only imagine what perhaps the land has in store for the people who dwell here today, the ones who feel the need to build structures that don't belong and the ones who allow it. With a population that grew from 44 in the entire city of Los Angeles in 1771 to the year 2000's population of 33,784 in Beverly Hills, what legacy do we leave for the future? What clandestine beauty will survive? To answer that we need to preserve our canyons in such a way that they give us, “the answers to questions we don't yet know how to ask”.

CANYON LAND USE: BCA at Work

The BCA and Canyon residents have moved forward on several fronts during the last few months. The City Planning Department is in the final stages of preparing revised language for the Hillside Ordinance, which will affirm the BCA's interpretation of the Hillside Ordinance as limiting the height of structures located on sub-standard streets. The revised language will make it clear that oversized structures cannot be constructed on narrow Canyon streets without a separate approval process in which residents and the BCA will have their say.

Thanks to the active involvement of nearby residents (with an assist from the BCA) in opposing an application for a Tentative Parcel Map for a now vacant steep hillside lot located on Oak Pass, the owner recently withdrew his application for City approval of the proposed Tentative Parcel Map. On another front, the BCA successfully supported neighbors' objections to a proposal to obtain discretionary waiver of the City's on-site parking requirements sought by the owner of a steep flag lot below High Ridge Drive. The Planning Commission denied the request. See "Sweet Victory" by Nickie Miner in this issue.

The BCA also is supporting neighbors' efforts to ensure that a proposal to build on a lot on Java near Mulholland, which proved to be unstable during the Northridge earthquake, will not be allowed until and unless the owners demonstrate that the house can be built to present earthquake and geologic standards.

Finally, the BCA is working with Councilman Weiss' office in an effort to overhaul the Hillside Ordinance to improve the City's fractured land use approval process, which presently allows our Canyon to be scarred by massive grading and retaining walls, often without any meaningful city discretionary review. This will be a major undertaking that will require support — financial and otherwise — not only from Canyon residents, but also from residents and homeowners' associations in the several other Council Districts where the Hillside Ordinance applies. In many ways, the proposal to overhaul the Hillside Ordinance is perhaps the most important undertaking upon which the BCA has ever embarked.

Meanwhile, we encourage all Canyon residents to contact the BCA's hotline whenever they learn of any development proposal that requires notice to nearby property owners or, even without a notice, if Canyon residents discover what appears to be inappropriate grading or construction activities.

David Elson

SWEET VICTORY

Residents of Benedict Canyon can make a difference. The West LA Planning Commission unanimously voted to overturn a variance previously granted by the Zoning Administration. The variance had been granted to the owners of an inaccessible lot on High Ridge Drive in order to permit development of the property.

When purchased, the High Ridge lot was clearly identified as not suitable for building. Building code requires that a single-family

residence must have off-street, on-site parking in the form of two side-by-side, covered spaces. The limitations of the lot preclude a feasible way to satisfy code requirements. Set on the slope of a ravine far from the street, down the mountain behind other homes, this inherently problematic property's only access is a long, narrow strip of land. It is between two houses where it meets the street and it is too steep for a driveway.

The Zoning Administrator, in defense of the Zoning Administration's decision to grant the variance, tried to persuade the panel of Planning Commissioners to invent ways to satisfy the access requirement and approve uncharacteristic alternative solutions for off-street parking. This implies that it is the City's job to ultimately make a bad land purchase good.

Neighbors addressed the panel and gave excellent presentations to refute the Zoning Administrator's position. Representatives from the BCA also spoke in opposition to the variance. Bonnie Kopp, of Councilman Jack Weiss' office, strongly backed our position. She cautioned that not every lot could be considered fit for building. Those that are not should not automatically be granted variances. Good judgment about the site conditions, not the threat of a lawsuit, should influence these decisions.

The Planning Commission recognized that the variance was granted without sound analysis and on May 15, 2002 they revoked the variance permit. This was a major land use decision and an important victory for Benedict Canyon and for all of the hillside areas of Los Angeles.

Nickie Miner

BCA WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMEBERS

SUSAN MOSES

Benedict Canyon has been my home on and off since 1990. Nature, an irreplaceable form of culture and wealth and a source of solace, is what gives me my lasting passion for this place. I enjoy contemplating its beauty, its meanings, and its moods. Participating in a backlash against the disrespectful destroyers of the land in our community is of particular interest to me, in whatever form or forum that takes. If only the noble voice of our hillsides, quickly turning to waste by tons of stucco and concrete, could speak out for the legal rights of its plants, trees, and wildlife—I wonder what it would have to say.



Susan Moses

BARBARA BERKOWITZ

I bought my house in July, 1999 and remodeled through December, 2000. I moved in at the end of December, 2000.

Besides the challenge of totally redoing my house, I loved the area because it was close to town and my office, but the Canyon has a feeling that you are far away from the hustle of the city.

I enjoy the peace and quiet.



Barbara Berkowitz

Also, many of my neighbors walk their dogs and kids on the street, so you meet them. Unlike many other neighborhoods, it is nice that I actually know and enjoy many of my neighbors.

I would like to see more neighbors acting neighborly. Clearly, people must recognize that parking is limited, and should park their cars in their driveways/garages. Too many people use their garages as workshops or storage units, and then park everyday on the street to the inconvenience of others. Also, it would be gracious if neighbors put their trash bins away, as required by law. Trashcans left in front of houses, or visible from the street, make the entire neighborhood look tacky.

VANESSA PARSONS

I have resided in Benedict Canyon since October 2001. My fiancée, Danny, has lived in the canyon for over three years and has introduced me to our friendly and great neighbors. I am enjoying living in a location that has great beauty and convenience. I live in the mountains but I am really so close to the City.

I am expressing my interest in trying to improve and protect the Canyon by participating as a member of the Board of Directors of BCA and joining in on discussions of how to improve traffic problems, how to protect our natural ridgelines and preserve the quality of life as



Vanessa Parsons

we know it in Benedict Canyon and other issues that affect us all.

MICHAEL CHASTEEN

My wife, Gwen Lewis and I have lived in the canyon for 11 years, however my wife lived first in Benedict Canyon in the early 60's when her father moved the family from N.Y. What we like most about the canyon is the rural "wild" characteristics, combined with the close proximity to Beverly Hills and Los Angeles city facilities. I would like to retain as much of the natural landscape as possible in the Canyon. We must accept growth and change, but we must also fight our adversaries who would overbuild for selfish motives.



Michael Chasteen

CHAPIN HUNT, JR.

It has been five years since I moved into the hills of Benedict Canyon. The features that were attractive to me and my family were the majestic green hillsides, beautiful ridgelines and lovely views. The feature of the canyon that we enjoy the most is the country atmosphere. As a member of the BCA board of directors, one of my goals is to discourage all development and construction on our hilltops. I will also continue to encourage individual residents to keep the streets in front of their own homes clean and free of trash.



Chapin Hunt, Jr.

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BCA PRESIDENT'S LETTER

We are grateful and pleased with the turnout at the Annual Meeting, held at the Beverly Hills Hotel on March 18th. As a network of volunteers and supporters, the 54-year-old Benedict Canyon Association is involved in making our canyon a better place to live. In truth, we are a long way off from achieving many of our goals, but overall a lot of good has transpired.

Implementing a BCA sponsored Emergency Preparedness Program is one of the positive ways we have dedicated ourselves. Trainees attended a seven-week course given by the LAFD, where they learned to deal with disasters of all types and how to survive for up to 72-hours, in the event that emergency help is prevented from arriving. We were proud to honor the first graduates who committed themselves to attending every session and are now prepared to lead their neighborhood in the event of a disaster. Reaching out this way truly strengthens the fabric of our neighborhood.

One of the Canyon's most visible tragedies is the destruction of our ridgelines. The BCA is working hard to change the current regulatory environment that allows for the grading of hillsides without appropriate review and comment from adjacent neighbors and communities. Amending the city's Grading and Building Regulations was one of the solutions proposed by the BCA in a discussion at the Annual Meeting. Review of this issue by Councilman Jack Weiss' office will bring it to the subsequent attention of the City Council.

In addressing our existing Hillside Ordinance, the featured speaker of the evening, Councilman Jack Weiss, endorsed our efforts by maintaining that he will continue to work for positive change of the current regulations. The support of Mr. Weiss and the City Council in endorsing improved notification requirements is imperative to the prevention of any further "mansions on the hillsides".

City departments, including Police, Fire, and Traffic, were on hand to discuss various issues, but the hottest topic of the evening was traffic in the Canyon – a problem that the BCA continues to address.

Remember that the BCA is here to support your concerns, and we can really use your help during our 2002 Donor Program – so if you haven't already done so, you can strengthen our cause by filling out and mailing in your Membership Application. I would like to wish everyone a safe and fun summer. We at the BCA are ready for a new way to think about the future. How about you?


Chick Harris, President

Cont. from pg. 7
NEW BOARD MEMBERS

STEVEN BERCK

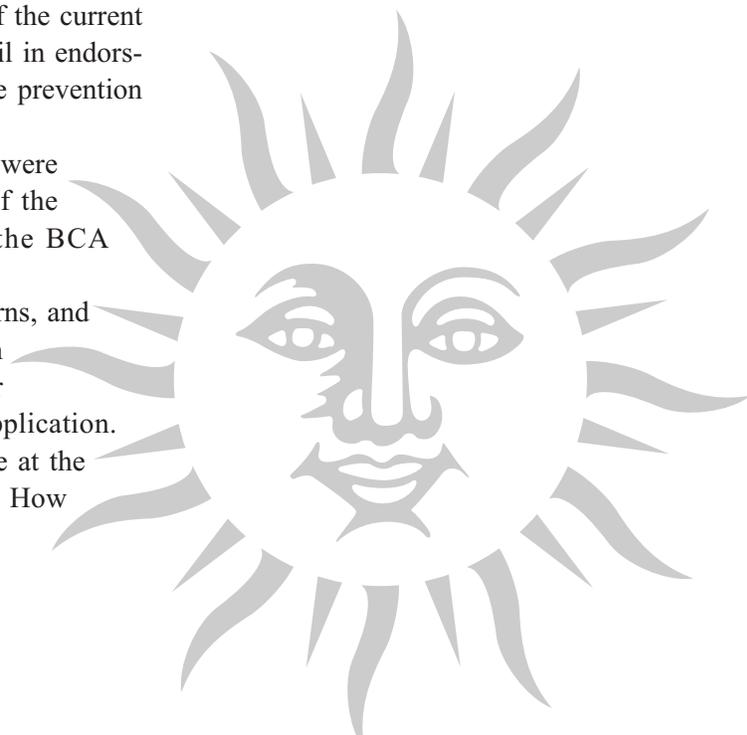
We purchased a hillside parcel of property and constructed a home for our family 11 years ago. I chose this location partly because of the quiet and pristine life style that I knew we



Steven Berck

would enjoy and because our home would be in close proximity to my office. But, more importantly, there were lots of children in the immediate vicinity and I was assured that my children would find playmates.

I'm currently on BCA's Land Use Committee and am interested in protecting our ridgelines from further development. Also of major concern to me is automobile safety and traffic issues in the Canyon.



BCA WISH LIST: Ten Little Things Residents Can Do That Would Make All the Difference...

By Susan Moses

1

And first on our list: That would be—bring your trashcans in immediately after pick up. Playing bumper cars with them is no fun and besides that, eye-candy they are not.

2

Number Two: Our community should always be clean for company—so, don't let any itinerant trash just sit there. Pick it up and teach your children to do the same, proving the old adage that many hands really do make light work.

3

Number Three: Keep your dog on a leash. We all love dogs, and if we don't, we should. "I don't want to hit your dog, so PLEASE don't ruin my day."

4

Number Four: Explore all the opportunities for social communiqué—get to know your neighbors and make our canyon a safer place to live. So shout out an invite to the recluses next door and stiffen their resolve with a cool cup of Cava. If we don't find our way back to Mayberry soon—who knows what could happen?

5

Number Five: Hire an informed architect or decorator who could do an edit on your existing structure. Some of us think we are aesthetically inclined but, truth be told—some of us are not—so do us all a favor and let the experts interpret your needs. You wouldn't think of giving yourself a nose job without a plastic surgeon's license—now would you?

6

Number Six: Don't forget to turn around and enjoy the view. Go the speed limit—nothing more, nothing less.

7

Number Seven: We're all partial to a bit of flora—Plant a beautiful tree and replenish our most precious, but ill-respected resource—OXYGEN. If they found a way to charge us for water—just think how much our wallets will suffer when they figure out a way to market air.

8

Number Eight: Bankroll in the fantasy of summer-camp-goes-to-the canyon by creating an outdoor space, especially because we Angelenos have all the good weather. Your own home could be just the urban getaway you were dreaming of getting to.

9

Number Nine: Take a black & white photograph of our Canyon. Perhaps it's shown at a way-in-the-future LACMA exhibit, "The Millennium Zeitgeist of LA: A Time Capsule in Black & White". Moreover, you too will go down in history.

10

Lastly Number Ten: Surface and soar as a patron of the community—don't just retreat to the prettiness of your own Pacific plot—join a local conservancy: The Tree People, The Los Angeles Conservancy, or for that matter attend the meetings or become a board member of the Benedict Canyon Association—we could all use your time and support... It beats the Internet for getting to know one another.

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BERNICE BROWN

coming home that served both her family and the needs of a governor.

Bernice blossomed as first lady, emerging as a true political partner to her husband, Pat. She was a marvelous hostess, as cordial with prime ministers and presidents as with state senators and mayors. While not without strong, well-considered opinions, she left the politics to the governor.

“I know Pat well and I can make a first-rate banana cake,” she said. “But neither of these qualifications makes me a political critic.”

After the years of public life, Bernice and Pat moved to Kip Drive in Benedict Canyon in 1966. Bernice focused on the real passions of her life: her garden, her golf, her governors and her grandchildren. And then, all the great grandchildren. She always found time to counsel or comfort or encourage the young people trooping through the family home.

With a genuine interest in other people, Bernice championed educational reading programs in Los Angeles and was active in various philanthropic causes, including the DOVES volunteer program and the John Douglas French Alzheimer’s Foundation. She was a strong supporter of the arts.

A person close to the family said, “Bernice insisted on order and civility. And that’s the way she lived.”

Those standards of thought and action, and her wry sense of humor, served as the compass that kept the Brown family on course as it successfully traversed some of the most tumultuous years in California’s history. Benedict Canyon will miss Bernice Brown.

Newsflash!

On June 7th, the BCA achieved a considerable victory at City Hall when the City Council passed an amendment to the Hillside Ordinance which modifies the definition of the areas in which the Hillside Ordinance applies.

During the administrative and court litigation which the BCA brought to prevent the late Mark Hughes from constructing an oversized structure on the highest rim of our Canyon, the BCA learned that the City Zoning Administrator was interpreting the Hillside Ordinance to exempt property which **fronts on** a street which is 28 feet wide **at that point**.

The Zoning Administrator took that interpretation to mean that Hughes had the right to build a 45-foot house (the legal limit in areas of the City not covered by the Hillside Ordinance) instead of the 36-foot high maximum allowed under the Hillside Ordinance. The reason, according to the Zoning Administrator, was that the entrance to Hughes’ property fronts on the cul-de-sac where Tower Grove Drive ends. The

cul-de-sac is more than 28 feet wide, even though the streets leading from Benedict Canyon Drive to Hughes’ property are much narrower than the 28 feet required under the Ordinance.

Under the Zoning Administrator’s interpretation not only Hughes’ property, but probably hundreds of other pieces of property in the Canyon — parcels which front a cul-de-sac, or front a short stretch of 28-foot wide street which can only be reached by much narrower streets — would be exempt from the Hillside Ordinance.

The BCA first discovered the problem when Hughes tried to take advantage of the Zoning Administrator’s interpretation. Now, thanks to two years of effort by the BCA, and the assistance of our Council member Jack Weiss and fellow member Cindy Miscikowski, the loophole has been closed. The Hillside Ordinance has been amended to make it clear that it applies to **all** property in the City’s canyons, unless the property can be reached entirely by streets which are at the City-mandated standard width of 28 feet.

David Elson

BENEDICT CANYON RESIDENCE RECEIVES PRESERVATION AWARD

By Vera Dunn

The George R. Kress House, a Tudor Revival residence in Benedict Canyon, has been chosen to be among the winners of the Los Angeles Conservancy's 21st Annual Preservation Awards. The home was built in 1931 by George R. Kress, a self-taught engineer responsible for moving hundreds of structures throughout the Los Angeles area in the first half of the 20th century. It has previously been named to the National Register of Historic Places and has been declared a Cultural Monument of the City of Los Angeles.

According to Linda Dishman, the Conservancy's Executive Director, the George R. Kress House and Archive illustrate "the inspirational personal commitment necessary to preserve a single home of great historic resonance." The Preservation Award goes not only to the carefully preserved home, but to its archive of materials concerning the life and career of its builder who changed the face of Los Angeles.

Other winners of this year's awards include Los Angeles's newly restored City Hall, a conversion of Bullock's Westwood to new retail uses, and the spectacular renovation of Broadway's Orpheum Theatre. Past winners include the Bradbury Building, the Pantages Theatre, and UCLA's Royce Hall.

The Los Angeles Conservancy is Los Angeles' countywide historic preservation organization, with more than 7,000 members from

throughout the Los Angeles area. The Conservancy gives the Preservation Awards each year to recognize excellence in historic preservation activity around Los Angeles County. Winners are selected by an independent jury of distinguished architects, landscape architects, preservation professional, and business leaders.



George R. Kress House

The Preservation Awards were handed out at a May 8th luncheon at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The award for the George R. Kress House and Archive was presented to its owners, Rodney Kemerer and Lindsay Doran, and posthumously to Dianne Kress Franklin, the daughter of the builder. Kemerer, a board member of the Benedict Canyon Association, worked with Mrs. Franklin for years to compile and preserve the archival material regarding her father's extraordinary career as a mover of structures, as well as material regarding the Benedict Canyon house which was the only structure he ever built. The award announcement calls the archive "an irreplaceable portrait of the city's architectural history from the early 20th century."

"George Kress was a remarkable man," says Kemerer. "He loved Los Angeles, he loved Benedict Canyon, and he loved the house he built here at a time when the canyon was a virtual wilderness. I am sure it would have given him great satisfaction to see his house

preserved, and to see it honored in the company of so many other historic structures in the city that meant so much to him."

Board members of the BCA are very familiar with the George R. Kress House as it has been used to host numerous board meetings as well as the board's annual holiday party. The home has also been featured in various magazines as well as on a recent episode of Home and Garden Television's "If Walls Could Talk."

Benedict Canyon

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