

# Benedict Canyon

Spring/Summer 2003

Benedict Canyon Association Newsletter

Volume IV Issue 6

## A Life in the Canyon CHICK HARRIS

*By Rodney Kemerer*

Last December Chick Harris drove down the Canyon for the last time. None of us knew it was for the last time, not even Chick.

A few years ago Chick and his wife Nancy came to a BCA Board Meeting. Chick said he had recently retired and was interested in helping the community. I was immediately taken with this generous and warm man. His smile and perfect “ski-slope tan” invited you into his friendship. Chick jumped into BCA activities exactly like everything else in his life—full throttle and with the top down. Later when I saw him in his top-down Porsche, the image was perfect. For more than two years I had the absolute pleasure of helping this man fulfill part of his retirement plan, namely giving back to his community. And give he did, like no one I’ve ever met. Soon Chick and Nancy were hosting meetings

in their home and Chick was encouraging everyone, including me, to get BCA organized in the computer age. It wasn’t long before we had databases, links to city sites, e-mail and phone lists, while at the same time he



CHICK HARRIS 1940-2002

never lost sight of our common goals. In short, Chick was all the things you want in a community leader. He knew how to talk to city officials and get what he wanted, but never in an abrasive manner. As President of BCA, Chick organized, inspired, led and sometimes

dragged the Board into the new century.

I was happy to call Chick my friend, and as friends we frequently spoke of issues other than BCA business. One afternoon while talking, we realized that we had both just completed whole body scans as a preventive health measure. My results were okay; his were not. Yet from that day until the day he left the Canyon, Chick never stopped working for the Association. No one on the Board would have thought any less of Chick if he had said he had to give up volunteer work while he dealt with his medical problems. He never did. Instead, Chick continued every day to help Benedict Canyon accomplish its agenda. I’ve never seen such unselfishness in my life. When Chick finally left the Canyon, he left behind a legacy for all who had the pleasure of knowing how kind and generous a person can truly be. While there may be one less top-down Porsche in the canyon, there are many broken hearts.

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# KEEP YOUR EYE OPEN FOR. . . .

## GREEN CORNER - TIPS ON YOUR CANYON LANDSCAPING

### EUCALYPTUS TREES

Historians tell us that eucalyptus trees were brought to California by Australians to be used as fence posts and railroad ties. When the wood was found to be unsuitable, the trees were then used for landscaping. They have been criticized because of their high oil content and shallow root system.

Many of these trees have matured in the canyon. If you have them on your property, you should do the following:

1) Thin them out in the winter and make sure the weight leans toward the hillside—not downhill if they are on a slope. Do not “top” the tree. A wire line will help if the tree needs to be supported or straightened.

2) Keep the trees watered as they will retain moisture and in case of fire they will survive, even if adjacent vegetation burns. Dry branches should be removed.

### EROSION AND FIRE CONTROL

If you have bare hills it isn't too late to plant native, drought and fire resistant vegetation. A well-established root system is also imperative for erosion control during heavy rains. Remember that a sprinkler system is a very good investment—moist plants resist fire.

The Los Angeles Fire Department tells us that our slopes must be cleared of unacceptable dry brush etc. all year long—not just in the spring when the inspections

usually occur. By now you should have received the Fire Departments color brochure outlining the details.

*Mary Ann Musico*

## I'M NOT A LAWN ORNAMENT

Los Angeles City Ordinances state that residents may not place their Trash Bins in the street on non-collection days. Containers may be placed out at 6:00 PM on the day before Trash pick-up and must be put away by 6:00 PM on the day of pick-up.

Our Canyon is being “uglified” by residents who leave their Trash Bins out all week long! Not only are the bins an unsightly addition to the environment, but they are also creating a dangerous nuisance to the walkers and drivers on our streets.

Please instruct your gardeners that IT IS NOT OK to put the containers out earlier than the specified time. This Ordinance might mean that you will need to put out and take in your containers yourselves. (Imagine!) Consider this a small sacrifice to keep the canyon beautiful.

If you need more information regarding this problem, please call (800) 773-2489 and the Bureau of Sanitation will answer your questions.

*Sandy Margolis*

## “ACCIDENT REPORTS”

Concerned that a lack of complete information about the frequency of traffic accidents prevents the City from taking action to improve safety in neighborhoods, Council member Jack Weiss has called for

improvements to the documentation of non-injury traffic accidents.

“Too many streets in my district are frequent accident sites, but without a complete file of accident reports it is difficult to document where these streets are,” said Weiss. “We shouldn't wait for someone to be hurt before we take action to improve safety on our streets.”

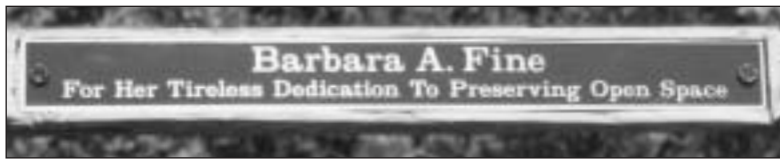
The frequency and severity of accidents are key criteria in the decision about placement of traffic calming measures, such as signals, stop signs, speed bumps, and speed tables. Typically, accident reports filed by the LAPD are used by the Department of Transportation to demonstrate dangerous streets and intersections and prioritize certain roadways for traffic calming measures. Reports are only taken by the LAPD when someone is injured.

## WE NEED POLLING PLACES

The Los Angeles City Clerk is asking your assistance in locating new polling places in the Benedict Canyon area for future elections. Suitable locations may include garages, guest houses or the living room/den of a residence. Locations that are accessible to the handicapped will be given priority consideration.

Property owners will be paid a stipend of \$50 for the use of their residence. Residents interested in contributing their property for upcoming election should call Harry Jacobs, Assistant Chief, Operations at (213) 978-0402. It's a great way to meet your neighbors and make \$50!

## MULHOLLAND OVERLOOK DEDICATED TO LONG-TIME BENEDICT RESIDENT



Close to one hundred people gathered on a warm, sunny morning April 26, 2003 to dedicate the Barbara A. Fine Overlook at the Summit.

Barbara dedicated much of her life to protecting the Santa Monica Mountains from development. In more than 30 years of effort, her extraordinary perseverance and vision contributed to the preservation of hundreds of acres of open space in the eastern part of the mountain range. She was instrumental in creating the citywide Hillside Ordinance, and was the crucial force behind the creation of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan.

All those who attended the dedication knew and worked with Barbara Fine and expressed their admiration and gratitude for all she had done to preserve the open space in the hills. Present were officials from the city of Los Angeles, the county and the state were present, together with community leaders and activists, BCA members, friends and relatives. Among those who spoke at the dedication were: Joseph Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; Jerry Daniel, Chairman of the Conservancy; County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky; L.A. City Planning Director Con Howe and Stephen Lukasik, President of the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council.

Barbara joined BCA shortly after moving to Benedict Canyon in 1967. She became a driving force in the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations, eventually serving as vice president. Her reputation as an expert in all aspects of the environment including geology, seismology, water quality, flood control, construction, grading and many other related subjects earned her the respect of officials in City Hall.

Residents remember Barbara's involvement in the ongoing struggle to maintain the quality of life in the Canyon, but many people do not realize that Barbara's civic involvement extended beyond the hills. She served as a County Commissioner on the Building Rehabilitation Appeals Board and the Water Quality Board. She headed a committee in City Hall that supervised the creation of the City's recycling program.

Barbara passed away unexpectedly three years ago, and is sorely missed by all who came into contact with her. Her legacy will enrich the quality of life for residents of Los Angeles for generations to come.

We urge residents to take time to visit the Barbara A. Fine Overlook at the Summit, located at 8901 Mulholland Drive, between Coldwater and Laurel Canyons, and enjoy its beauty and also to remember a most remarkable lady.

*Alan Fine*

## New Board Member Profile Linda Shokrian

My family and I have lived in Benedict Canyon since 1987. What attracts me most about the canyon is its peaceful, country like atmosphere. In the early morning, I can see deer and coyotes, listen to birds sing and in the evenings, hear crickets chirp. It calms me after a day of being



**Linda Shokrian**

“down the hill” among the hustle and bustle of one of the largest cities in the world. While being a supporter for many years, it is only recently that I have

taken a more active role in the Benedict Canyon Association. I want to help preserve our island of peace. I believe it has become ever more important in our world today, to become involved in our communities and to help look out for one another. For that reason, I am now serving as the Chairperson of the Emergency Preparedness Committee as well as being a member of the Newsletter Committee. I have met some wonderful, dedicated people in BCA and look forward to serving our community for many years to come.

# Here's to You, Mrs. Robinson

By M.G. Lord

Don't expect to see busloads of star-map-clutching tourists at the Virginia Robinson Gardens in Benedict Canyon. It is an insiders' destination. Although it has been owned and operated as a museum by the County of Los Angeles since 1982, its existence still surprises many Angelenos, including some who reside within the canyon. Even more startling, the 6.2-acre residence, which was built for Virginia Robinson, chairman of the board of the directors of the J.W. Robinson department store chain from 1933 to 1962, still feels like a private home. As you enter its sprawling grounds, you get the sense that she has stepped out for a spin in one of her Duesenbergs and will return shortly. Or perhaps she is checking out the chain's flagship store (now called Robinsons-May) on the corner of Whittier Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard.

This is pure fantasy, of course, because Mrs. Robinson died in 1977, just 48 days short of her 100th birthday. But her memory is very much alive through the influence of her philanthropy on the cultural identity of Los Angeles. She held the patrons party for the Hollywood Bowl at her house and, with another department-store heiress, Dorothy Buffum Chandler, helped found the Los Angeles Music Center. Her memory is also alive in her gardens, whose central lawn, or "mall," is dominated by three sculpted cranes, symbols of immortality.

If you aren't looking for the Robinson Gardens, you're not likely to find them by accident. They are located well off the beaten track, at 1008 Elden Way, behind a wall that conceals their vastness. From the street you can, however, see the house. It's a modified Beaux Arts structure that Mrs. Robinson's father, the architect Nathaniel Dryden, designed for her as a wedding present in 1911. Born in St. Louis and brought up in Los Angeles, she married Henry Winchester Robinson, son of Joseph Winchester Robinson, the Massachusetts-born

merchant, who founded the retail chain. The house is one of only six structures (four houses, two public buildings) in Beverly Hills on the National Register of Historic Places, where it was placed in 1979.

More striking, and completely invisible from Elden, is the Renaissance Revival Pool Pavilion, built in 1923 and designed by William Richards. It is modeled on the Villa Pasani in Stra, Italy. The complex features an entrance embellished with angels blowing trumpets and contains the oldest pool in Beverly Hills, where Mrs. Robinson swam daily for most of her life. Today the pool's function is principally decorative, and the pavilion is frequently rented to corporations for conclaves.

Gardens branch out to the east and west of the formal garden on the mall. To the east, beneath a loggia, is a tropical forest of king palms from Australia. To the west is the Italian garden, ornamented with fountains and treasures from Mrs. Robinson's Florentine sculpture collection, including two lions and a statue of Neptune. Behind the kitchen—or, more accurately, behind the quarters once occupied by Mrs. Robinson's unmarried servants—is the kitchen garden. It features herbs, citrus trees, and soapote plants, which produce an exotic, mango-like fruit.

Because Mrs. Robinson knew everyone who was anyone in her day, her plants and possessions often have associations to other historic Californians. The cactus, for example, that dominates the view from her dressing room, was not always sprawling and taller than her house. In 1920, Mrs. Henry Edwards Huntington, whose husband established the Huntington Library, gave the plant to Mrs. Robinson in a one-gallon pot.

A cercus cactus is a night-blooming plant, pollinated by moths and bats. Docents share such important botanical lore with third graders every Friday at one o'clock when special child-oriented tours take place. Grown-ups can explore the gardens by appointment only, Tuesday



*Cont. pg. 5*

*Herè s to You, Mrs. Robinson*  
*Cont. from Pg. 8*

through Thursday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. and on Fridays at 10 a.m. only.

Visitors will also want to tour the house, whose master bedroom and bathroom have been recently restored. Although brought up as a Roman Catholic, Mrs. Robinson became interested in Eastern religions in later life, and the books in her library reflect these interests. In the hall near her bedroom there is also a tabletop model of the Taj Mahal, which belonged to her husband as a child. It is 100 years old and conspicuously damaged or, as a wag on a recent tour remarked of the department store heir, He was hard on his toys.”

I had the pleasure recently of being shown around by Timothy Lindsay, director of the Robinson Gardens, who used to work at the Los Angeles Arboretum in Arcadia. For him, the pleasure of heading the Robinson Gardens has to do not only with the attractions of its flora but also with the absence of certain Arboretum fauna. I finally got away from the peacocks, he confesses.

After visiting the estate, you might want to join the Friends of the Robinson Gardens, a non-profit organization that, along with the county, contributes to the estates’ preservation and upkeep. This group organizes two major annual fundraisers: a garden benefit tour, which provides an opportunity for contributors to visit six distinctive local gardens, and a patron’s ball, modeled on the elegant galas thrown by Mrs. Robinson herself. It also hosts a Christmas Party for children from Maryvale and Hathaway Children’s Services.

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## Outdoor Room

By Susan Moses

*I have stopped sleeping inside. A house is too small, too confining. I want the whole world, and the stars too.”*

*Sue Hubbell,  
 A Country Year (1986)*

The first time I slept outdoors in Benedict Canyon, it was with a friend on the roof of a house under a big oak and some sycamore trees. A concoction of a tented structure a tarp attached to the trees and angled toward a single stickkept us dry when it drizzled or rained. A new sense of mystery and magic of doing normal everyday activities such as cooking, reading and eating, began right there in that outdoor space.

During my first trip to Italy, while tipping a glass of Tiziano alfresco on the terrace of the Villa d’Este overlooking the enchanting shores of Lake Como with its ancient gardens in the background, profoundly changed me. It personified the sensuality and elegance of what an outdoor space surrounded by nature could be. It evoked in me images of the poets Shelley, Tenneyson, Longfellow, who all at one time walked the shores of the Lake.

Living in Benedict Canyon affords one the luxury of dining outside and sleeping with the windows open almost year round, and on those extraordinary nights when the full moon casts its magic light across the patio, I open the French doors and let the special glow and the smell of jasmine and the sounds of the night spill inside.

On nights like these, I return to

that experience of sleeping on the rooftop with my friend, remembering that we are creatures whose souls respond to nature. We are so much a part of it in fact, that anytime and anyway we can return to it, it restores us.

After all we have created, is it any wonder that we are heading back toward nature’s milieu of simplicity? We are drawn, I believe, almost magnetically to these outdoor spaces places where we can embrace our ancestral DNA and while gazing at the constellations, awaken in ourselves visions of stillness and calm. More essential to this feeling is an outdoor room or screened porch, than the confining, enclosed structures where we carry out the multi-tasking activities that consume our daily lives. Since the long, hot days of summer are approaching, I know that sometime soon I will be blowing up my inflatable bed and pitching it out on the deck to lie stretched and wide-eyed with a friend gazing up at the stars. The sheer notion of it excites and moves me.





## “I Think I’m Having a Heart Attack!”

*By Arlene Ruby-Leviton*

*We take so many things for granted when we feel well and don’t even think about them. But what happens when you suddenly need help? Let me tell you about Engine Company 99 on the morning of September 14, 2002.*

**M**y husband and I had gone out to dinner the night before and had a very pleasant and filling Italian meal. Since what I am about to relate wasn’t their fault, I won’t name the restaurant.

We had gone to sleep around midnight and I was sleeping very soundly when about 1:30 a.m. I felt a nudge on my shoulder. “Honey,” my husband said (and I thought, “Not tonight,”) “I think you better get up.”

I am a very good sleeper so it took me awhile to realize that he was in distress and needed me to wake up. “I think I’m having a heart attack,” he said quietly, and I lay there, immobilized for a few seconds until I realized that he was serious.

Being the good telephone person that I am, and a former nurse, I didn’t have much trouble dialing 911. I was told that help was on the way. The most important thing was that my husband was calm and

breathing easily. I did, however, forget the importance of an aspirin until later.

Despite the fact that we live on the top of a hill, two miles above Benedict Canyon, with no access from the top, it was amazing that the paramedics from Engine # 99 were there in 6 to 7 minutes. Four strapping gentlemen, kind and calm, ascended the stairs to our bedroom and proceeded to take charge.

Despite my former experience, as a nurse and how much I care about my husband, nothing comes close to the help these professional gentlemen provided.

They hoisted my rather large husband into the ambulance, after having given him nitroglycerin and the aspirin I had forgotten, and told me that Cedar Sinai Hospital Emergency Room was closed because of an overflow of patients. A wonderful alternative turned out to be UCLA where the Emergency room was virtually empty and the

care was immediate.

My husband had an emergency angioplasty.

No more pasta, very few carbs and six months later, he is 20 pounds thinner, healthier than ever and on the treadmill a lot.

Without the paramedics and their instant response, he might not be alive today. Many times in the past I have worried that it might not be so wonderful to live in a canyon in case of an emergency. How wrong I was! In fact, how lucky we are to live in Benedict Canyon and know that we are protected by the best.

I have been active in the Benedict Canyon Association almost since we moved here three and a half years ago. The BCA is responsible for insuring that paramedic emergency care is provided to the entire canyon. In the age of citywide budget cutbacks, that is quite an accomplishment. I hope that I have motivated you to join with us and get involved in an organization that has been helping people, and most recently my husband, in our wonderful canyon for over 50 years. In these troubled times, we must make time to help each other. Come to our next meeting, meet your neighbors and feel safe.

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*Here’s to You, Mrs. Robinson  
Cont. from Pg. 5*

You can also volunteer for hands-on work, either outdoors (say, pruning roses or planting annuals) or indoors (cataloging books or organizing archival material). “We can always find a place for people,” Lindsay assures, “depending on their ability or mobility.”

For an appointment, call 310-276-5367.

# THE CHECK IS IN THE MAIL

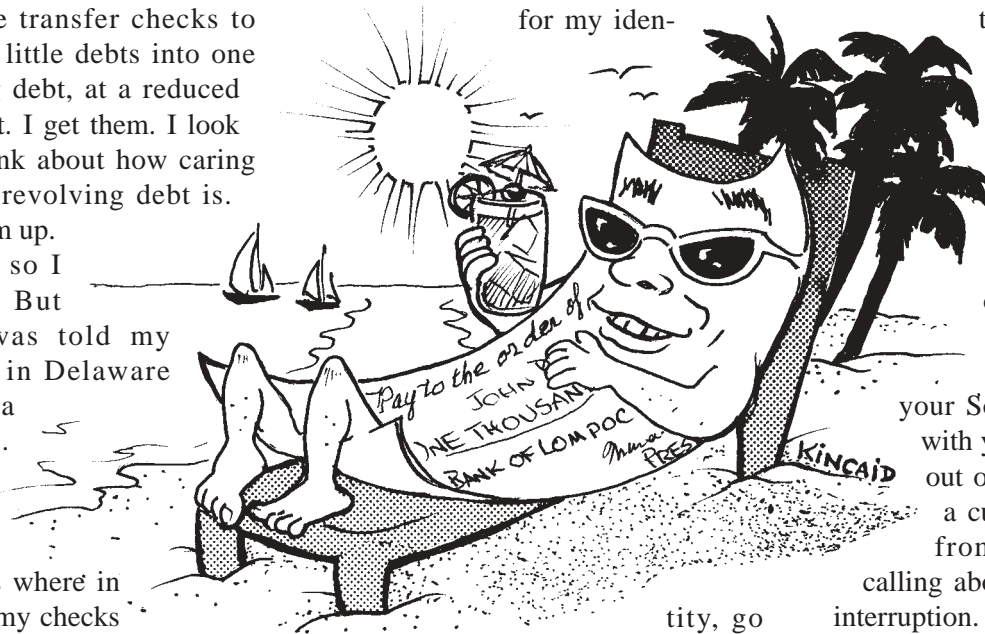
*By Lorraine Gallacher*

Shred 'em, burn 'em, line your cat tray with 'em, but make sure you destroy those unused "convenience checks" from your credit card company. Your credit providers are hoping you'll use those balance transfer checks to shift all your little debts into one big whopping debt, at a reduced rate of interest. I get them. I look at them. I think about how caring the world of revolving debt is. Then I rip them up.

Gone, or so I thought. But recently I was told my checks were in Delaware racking up a cool \$3000. An investigation began, but no one knows where in their lifespan my checks were stolen. They may have been pilfered from my mailbox, if they ever made it there, or just landed in an opportunist's hands after recycling. I'll never know, but on a bad day I imagine

the people who run the stop signs around here have something to do with it.

Thankfully, I'm not responsible for the three grand. I am, however, responsible for my iden-



tity, go figure, and want to make sure it's not out there partying without my approval. Identity theft is an increasing problem and balance transfer checks provide automatic access to someone's

name, address and what's left in their account that month. You don't know when they're coming so you don't know when they're missing.

Keep an eye on your mail. If anything goes missing report it to the Postal Service immediately. Get a locking mailbox if you want added security. Invest in a shredder, or risk the paper cuts and tear up your checks and other financial mail manually. Most importantly, guard your Social Security number with your life. Never give it out over the phone, even to a customer service person from Adelphia if you're calling about yet another service interruption.

I have no idea how or why those checks were stolen from me, but I now pray daily to the god of good credit. With her help my identity will stay in the canyon, not out there living large in Delaware.

## BCA needs your help!

- **Board of Directors:** BCA needs canyon residents interested in being actively involved in serving on the board of directors.
- **Land Use:** if you are interested in saving our ridgelines, please join our Land Use Task Force.
- **The BCA Newsletter:** Volunteers are needed to help keep this vital forum of information flowing. Articles are always appreciated.
- **Canyon Beautification:** Enjoy our lovely canyon? Please come help on projects devoted to the beautification of the canyon.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** A Committee is now forming. Let's help each other in case of an emergency.

**CALL BCA HOTLINE TO HELP  
310-553-4222**

# “Our Hills are Alive. . . ” And It May Not Be Music

By Kathryn Scott Miller

*Year after year driving north or even south on Benedict Canyon, we could marvel at the pristine, undefiled splendor of our hillsides. Yes, there was the occasional blight in the bosom of the canyon, but we took pride that our ridges, at least, were still at one with nature.*

Now our hills are alive with the sound of bulldozers and jackhammers reshaping our precious ridgelines. We’re witnessing the rise of virtual fortified hill towns atop concrete embankments. In a canyon free of commercial enterprise, we are suddenly being looked down on by what appear to be commercial size buildings.

What’s going on? Frankly, after decades of living in the canyon and

*O’er the ramparts we watched. . .  
Or are the ramparts  
overlooking us?*

enjoying my “Gorillas In the Mist” view, I took it for granted that our gloriously verdant ridgelines were protected by a conservation order. I’d also assumed that the hillside land was too steep and precarious to build on. I was wrong in both cases. As hilltops were bulldozed flat and great vertical walls of concrete began appearing, I took it personally, becoming ever more alarmed by the encroachment of these looming McMansions.

No one wants to prevent anyone from building their dream home on property they own. However, it is objectionable if the building of that structure, a single family dwelling the size of a major hotel, requires

the wholesale destruction of the landscape and the erection of vast slabs of concrete to provide a suitable site.

My growing ire was enough to rouse me to activism or, at least, to attend a BCA meeting to see what I could do to help preserve as much of our canyon’s natural beauty as possible from further mutilation. In its 56 years, the BCA has traditionally been involved in the planning of every major development in the canyon. In response to violations of height restrictions, most notably with the notorious

Mark Hughes property, the Land Use Task Force was established, composed of a diverse, skilled, highly motivated group of neighbors, including architects, realtors, attorneys and others with a background in land use regulations. Currently, these dedicated professionals are working with Councilman Jack Weiss and the City Council to amend the Grading and Building Regulations and change the existing Hillside Ordinance to limit the size of retaining walls. In

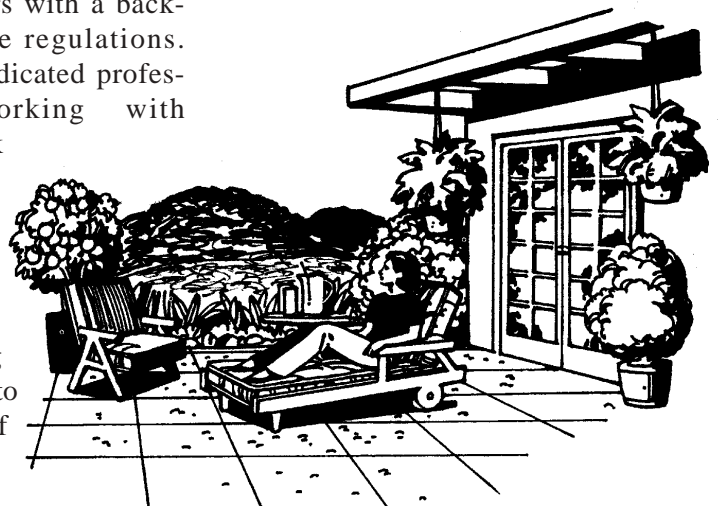
recent months, there have been numerous victories in blocking variances that would circumvent restrictions on height allowances. Under proposal are revisions to the existing ordinances that would plug loopholes regarding height restrictions, grading and retaining walls.

It’s not too late to effect change! You may look up at the ridges and think the canyon is ruined beyond repair, but continued unrestricted construction could make matters far worse. In order to continue as a watchdog force and to effectively safeguard our canyon against further over-development, the Land Use Task Force needs to hear about violations of hillside ordinances.

What is also needed to fight the further tragic destruction of our precious ridgelines and wooded hillsides are more volunteers willing to contribute their time and talents to BCA.

As individuals we can accomplish only so much. As a group we can make a big difference. Please call the BCA hotline at (310) 553-4222 or e-mail us at [BCAorg@aol.com](mailto:BCAorg@aol.com) to offer your services and ask what you can do to help. All it takes is a passion to preserve the green hills of Benedict Canyon.

Hey, someone’s got to do it.





## Down With Retaining Walls

**Y**ou can't miss seeing them...the massive retaining walls of three large residential projects being built in Benedict Canyon. Two of these projects are on Davies Drive and one on Cielo.

If you think these walls are massive, you are right. The walls on one project are 42 feet high by 2080 feet long—I am told that they can be seen from the space shuttle!

We have been asked by residents “why didn't BCA do something to stop these projects, or force a reduction in the height of the retaining walls?” The answer is we could not stop these massive retaining walls from being built, because there is no height limit for retaining walls in the Los Angeles Building Code.

This subject was addressed at our Annual Meeting by City Councilman Jack Weiss, and by Michael Chasteen of BCA. Working together with our council office, BCA is resolved to change the city building code to limit the height of retaining walls in all the Hillside canyons of Los Angeles.

On Feb 6, 2003 we joined Jack Weiss, local residents and representatives from many other homeowner associations and our Neighborhood Council at 1740 Viewmont Drive in the Hollywood Hills. Standing in front of a gray cement retaining wall some 80 feet



***BCA Board Member Sandy Margolis inspects new wall in Benedict Canyon***

high, Jack announced to the press and the public, his intention to propose to the L.A. City Council the creation of a working group (Planning Dept., City Attorney, Dept. of Building and Safety, Office of the CLA, along with Council offices representing hillside areas) to develop recommendations for legislation to limit the height, size and visual impact of retaining walls, and to present its findings to the City Council Planning and Land Use Management committee within 60 days.

The BCA strongly commends and supports our Councilman Jack Weiss for his stand on this issue.

The press conference was covered on Channel 7 news Thursday evening, Feb 6, with pictures of the

Davies Drive retaining walls featured.

The Los Angeles Times also covered the press conference and retaining wall issues in an article in the Sunday Real Estate section, Feb. 16, 2003.

Your association works closely with our elected representatives and the media to further the interests of our community. We will prevail on this issue.

*Barbara Nichols*

## One Person Can Make a Difference

**A**pproximately five years ago, Babette Bloomgarden, board member of BCA, started a one-person campaign to get a passing lane or a stop light at Mulholland and Roscomare Drives. Babs shares transportation chores for her grandchildren who attend the Mirman School, on Mulholland Drive. There are six other schools in this corridor.

Babette single-handedly started her campaign to convince the City of Los Angeles to install a sign that read “Watch for Stopped Traffic” after noting that every morning at least 6-9 cars were lined up beyond a blind curve waiting to drop off children at school. “This was an accident waiting to happen,” said Babette. She contacted our Councilman, Jack Weiss, alerted him to the dangerous situation and with his help a much needed passing lane and a traffic signal at Roscomare and Mulholland Drives has been installed.

Now, all of the children will be safe when transported to and from the schools along this corridor. Not bad Babette!

*Babette Bloomgarden*

## BCA PRESIDENT'S LETTER



BCA has an extensive agenda for 2003, but will focus our efforts on four major areas:

We are anticipating a July 1, 2003 start date for the reconstruction of the roadway in upper Benedict Canyon from Hutton to Mulholland. We will continue to communicate with our Council Office and City/County agencies to assure a smooth start for the project. All effort will be made to keep Benedict Canyon residents informed of schedules and how access will be handled for residents in the construction area. We are working with the Department of Transportation to discourage commuter traffic rerouting through Deep Canyon and Hutton Drive, and avoid further congestion of Benedict Canyon to Hutton.

We will support our Council Office efforts to enact new building codes limiting the height of retaining walls. Many other communities limit retaining wall height, and require retaining walls to be terraced, with setbacks, and obscured with adequate landscaping.

Traffic and safety issues are a continuing concern of BCA and our residents. We have had several major accidents along the canyon, as a result of excessive speed and passing over double yellow center lines. Better signage, road markings and enforcement are needed.

For our own protection we need to develop an emergency response and disaster preparedness program within our canyon. When city services cannot help us, we must be prepared to help our neighbors and ourselves. BCA will work with our Neighborhood Council to develop such a plan.

Please contact BCA at 310-553-4222 with your ideas and concerns. Remember you are BCA. We need your help as volunteers working to achieve these goals. We also need your membership in BCA. Please respond to our 2003 Membership/Donor Program. It is convenient to say, "I'm busy, let someone else do it." We are all busy, but we must do what needs to be done together, and we need all the talents of our community.

Barbara Nichols  
President BCA

## CANYON EMERGENCY: Are You Ready?

### WHAT?

A SafetyNET emergency preparedness presentation; part of the City of Los Angeles' Neighborhood Emergency Training program. It empowers you to take appropriate action quickly, when and where it is needed before, during, and after an emergency or disaster.

### WHEN?

Thursday, June 26, 2003 at 7:00 PM

### WHERE?

Beverly Hills Women's Club  
1700 Chevy Chase Dr.  
(corner of Benedict Canyon)  
Beverly Hills  
(parking in rear off alley)

### WHY?

During a crisis, there is much competition for City resources. Unfortunately, that means that police and fire personnel, ambulance and water services may not be immediately available. City officials recommend everyone be prepared to do without City services for at least 72 hours. SafetyNet discusses the basic elements of an emergency preparedness plan including evacuation procedures, water and food storage, emergency kits, fire and utility safety, basic first aid and CPR. BCA urges all canyon residents to be prepared.

### HOW?

To attend this free, one-hour presentation and to make sure there are enough handouts and materials for all, please RSVP to Linda Shokrian 310-278-7861 or e-mail her at [BCAorg@aol.com](mailto:BCAorg@aol.com).

## 2003 BCA Annual Meeting Beverly Hills Hotel

The Benedict Canyon Association Annual Meeting was held Jan. 27, 2003 at the Beverly Hills Hotel. We were glad to see so many of our residents attending to hear speakers on three topics of current interest.

The Department of Public Works and the Department of Transportation gave presentations on the reconstruction plan for the upper Benedict Canyon roadway, from Hutton to Mulholland. The project is finally scheduled to get underway July 1, 2003. The roadway will be closed to through traffic for 18-24 months.

Residents, service people, family and friends will have access during construction. Otherwise, upper Benedict Canyon will be closed to the public. While we know that this will be an inconvenience, we also know how much we need these improvements.

The Public Works Department will meet with residents immediately adjacent to the construction area to answer specific questions before the project begins. Please call Kendrick Okuda at 213-847-6302 and give him your name and phone number, so that you will be contacted at that time. This project has been in the planning stages for many years. It has finally come about as a result of hard work by many members of BCA, our Councilman Jack Weiss, County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and Commissioner of Public Works, Ellen Stein.

Michael Chasteen, a BCA board member, gave a presentation on our efforts to pass new laws that

will reduce the allowable height limit on retaining walls in new residential construction in the canyon. BCA has a very active Land Use Committee that monitors all applications for new home construction requiring extensive grading and/or retaining walls. We also monitor variance applications for exemptions to the Hillside Ordinance, which limits construction height to 36 feet.

Steven Lukasik, President of the Bel Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council, gave a presentation on their projects. BCA is a member of this group with four representatives. The Neighborhood Council area extends from the San Diego Freeway through Laurel Canyon, and from Mulholland Drive to Sunset. The Neighborhood Council is addressing such issues as cell phone usage, traffic congestion, construction and emergency preparedness, among other topics.

The Benedict Canyon Association is here for you. Please fill out and mail in your membership/Donor application for 2003. We need everyone's support.

*Barbara Nichols*



## THE FUTURE IS GETTING GREENER....

*by Irma Munoz, TreePeople*

If you have visited Coldwater Canyon Park recently, you may have noticed that it resembles a ghost town and not the home of TreePeople. The old buildings have been torn down in preparation for TreePeople's new home—The Center for Community Forestry.

Structures will be built of materials that are reused, recycled or come from renewable resources. Gardens and landscaping will use recycled rainwater. People will come here to experience up close how a healthy urban eco-system can thrive like a forest.

The completed Center will serve as the headquarters for TreePeople's staff and will also be the primary site for the organization's world-class educational programs. The new facility will house TreePeople's specialized nursery and will coordinate extensive tree planting efforts.

TreePeople staff built their temporary offices in two days just 500 feet from the parking lot. They actually assembled seven yurts (circular tents) and have named their temporary home, "New Yurt City." It resembles a village surrounded by a fruit orchard. During your next trip to Coldwater Canyon Park, follow the signs to "New Yurt City" and visit TreePeople.

Construction is scheduled to start this fall. The park will remain open to the public during construction. For more information about this exciting new center and to learn how you can participate, please call (818) 753-4600.

# “Got Milk?” . . . .Or Bottled Water?

*By Don Farkas*

**M**y name is Don Farkas and I am the chairman of the Public Safety Committee of the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council. I recently made a presentation asking for the adoption of a proposed Community Emergency Plan by the Benedict Canyon Association. The proposed Community Emergency Plan was primarily designed to help communities organize themselves to deal with foreseeable natural disasters such as major earthquakes, large brush fires, or landslides. However, the basic organization and communications preparations called for by the Plan could also conceivably be adapted for use even in the possible event of a man-made disaster such as a terrorist attack

Officials of the City of Los Angeles and other governmental authorities recommend that, as a wise precaution, every individual and household have an emergency plan in case of a disaster. Such personal plans should include

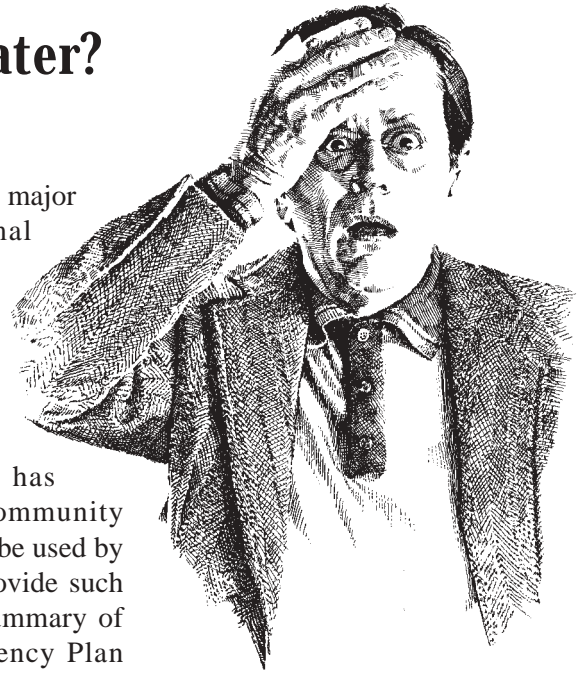
- a means to allow family members to communicate via out-of-state phone contacts
- agreed upon alternative meeting places
- provisions for safely maintaining necessary emergency items (such as water, food, shelter and sanitary supplies, medicines, cash in small denominations, emergency tools, can openers, fire extinguishers, extra eye-glasses, etc.)

Many community groups, such as BCA, have realized that it would be a good idea to have in place a community-wide plan for organizing a more effective, coordinated

response in the event of a major disaster in which normal emergency services were to become either severely delayed or were unavailable. The Public Safety Committee of the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council has developed a sample Community Emergency Plan that can be used by community groups to provide such a basic framework. A summary of the Community Emergency Plan can be seen on the Los Angeles Community Policing website at [www.lacp.com](http://www.lacp.com).

The Los Angeles City Mayor’s Office of Emergency Preparedness offers community groups a one-hour “SafetyNet” training program that covers essential basic skills. The Benedict Canyon Association will be sponsoring a “SafetyNet” meeting June 26, 2003 at 7 PM at the Beverly Hills Women’s Club, 1700 Chevy Chase Drive in Beverly Hills. In addition, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) also provides an excellent 17 1/2 hour Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training course for community volunteers who would like to receive more instruction and practice opportunities. I highly recommend that residents of the hillside communities obtain or update their CERT certification training. Persons who are interested in finding out more about CERT training can call the LAFD’s Disaster Preparedness Unit at (818) 756-9674.

In the event that telephone services were to become interrupted after a disaster, alternative modes of



communication will be necessary such as two-way radios, battery powered CB radios and trained, licensed amateur short wave radio operators (“Hams”). The LAFD is sponsoring a volunteer organization called the Auxiliary Communications Services (ACS) that is made up of licensed Ham radio operators who have agreed to work as an integral part of the LAFD’s communications infrastructure in the event of a disaster. Anyone who is interested in finding out more about ACS can view their website at [www.lafd.org/acs.htm](http://www.lafd.org/acs.htm).

One of the published goals of the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council Public Safety Committee has been to reduce the risk of fires occurring after an earthquake. This is especially vital in the Santa Monica Mountains area since the LAFD has previously stated that there might be insufficient resources immediately available to fight a large brush fire in the area if one broke out after a large earthquake. Depending on the circumstances, emergency

*Cont. pg. 7*

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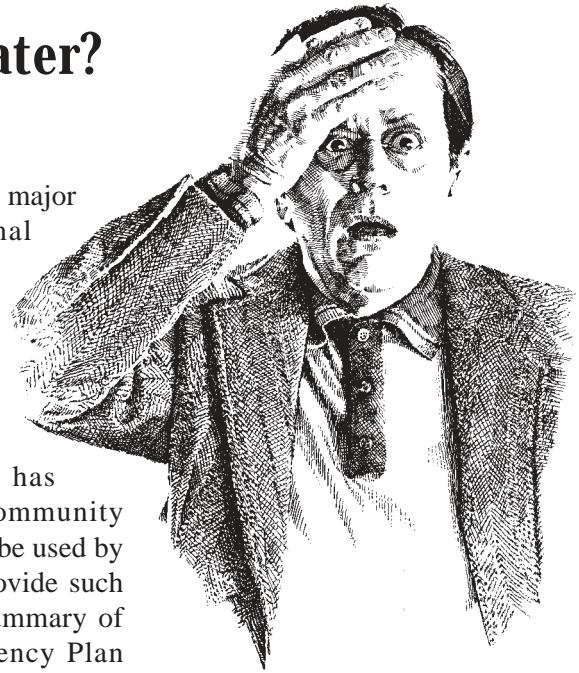
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# HELP PROTECT BENEDICT CANYON



**BECOME A BCA MEMBER**

**JOIN TODAY**

**Put Down “Roots” in Your Own Garden.  
Select a Donor Tree and Grow in Your Own Community.**

**- Details **SS** inside this issue -**

**ENJOY YOUR SUMMER IN THE CANYON**



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