

Benedict Canyon

Summer 2012

Benedict Canyon Association Newsletter

Volume V Issue 15

Famous and Forgotten

by Susan Savage

You may recall reading the LA Times' story about the 1950's B-movie starlet and Playboy Bunny whose "partially mummified skeletal remains" were found by her neighbor in Benedict Canyon.

Well...I'm that neighbor. I found Yvette Vickers on Wednesday, April 27th, 2011, a little before 2:00 pm. I know the time exactly because the police, who interrogated me for several hours, informed me, "your call to 911 came in at 2:02 pm". I did, after all, "technically" break into her house.

I later learned from a neighbor that the police actually considered me a suspect for a while. I thought my neighbor was joking, but she wasn't. I asked her if that made any sense. Would I murder her, wait nearly a year to break into her house to "find her" and then call the police? And my motive? Did anyone by chance find Yvette's will carefully placed underneath her body leaving everything to me, a neighbor she barely knew? Apparently, the cliché still stands, "no good deed goes unpunished".

You see, when I decided to scale

a steeply graded hillside to Yvette's porch to see if she was okay, I did so with the best of intentions. I would have gone in through the front gate like a normal person had it not been locked from the inside with two slide bolts at the top, a nail in the center



Yvette Vickers

and a 2x4 bracing the bottom. No one was getting in that way. I went next door and knocked at another neighbor's house. A man spoke through the intercom. I identified myself and asked if he'd seen Yvette.

"Who?" "Yvette, your next door neighbor? Have you seen any activity at her house lately?" "What?" He didn't even open the front door. I was clearly on my own.

From the moment I saw the yellowing mail at the bottom of her open mailbox and cobwebs for the first time, I just had a bad feeling with no logical explanation for it. But try explaining that to the police after you've broken into someone's house; I guarantee you it doesn't look good and makes you seem a little crazy. Of course, when your feelings turn out to be right, at least they won't charge you with a crime.

Since that infamous day when my life and Yvette's went viral together in over 900 newspapers worldwide, our lives were forever linked. I've learned a few things, and I'd like to share them with you. This is a cautionary tale. One I hope can be prevented from ever happening again on my street or yours.

When the LA Times broke the story, I was certainly not prepared for what followed. Reporters, photographers and news trucks camped out in

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Letter from the President



Dear Benedict Canyon Residents,

Since 1947, the Benedict Canyon Association has served our Canyon and surmounted challenges to our unique community, each of us helping in our own way.

Today we find ourselves threatened by an unanticipated challenge: a division of representation and interests, not by residents but by federal regulation. Every decade following our national census, we are required to redistrict politically. The intent is to assure that equitable representation is afforded to all citizens.

As of this writing, the Redistricting Commission has submitted a draft to split Benedict Canyon down the middle. The Canyon would be the dividing line between two Los Angeles City Council Districts. Should these plans become final, our neighborhood of nearly three thousand families whose common interests and problems unite us as a single community will be diminished, our common interests no longer assuredly common, our voice potentially silenced.

There is a basic concept that unless people are united, it is easy to destroy them. That is why the phrase "United we stand, divided we fall" has been used in songs and adopted as mottos of nations and states. We must speak in one loud voice to protect our homes and our neighborhood. Your voice is heard through your Benedict Canyon Association membership. More than ever, our community needs the participation of every resident through membership in your Benedict Canyon Association.

During flush times and tough times, our residents support the work of the BCA to sustain the quality of our neighborhood. Because of the challenges we face this year, we need your commitment, now more than ever, to make this the strongest year for Benedict Canyon. Take out your pens to renew your membership, and if you've not joined in the past, make it a point to join now.

BCA Board members have already joined and we encourage you to do the same. We volunteer our time and effort because we love Benedict Canyon and are passionate about these hills.

The Benedict Canyon Association is presently taking the lead in implementing an ordinance to save the remaining ridge lines. As a result of The Benedict Canyon Association's efforts, the Hillside Ordinance, the Hillside Mansionization and the Retaining Wall Ordinances are now in place.

We currently are in communication with City agencies, the Los Angeles Fire Department, tree experts and others to safely preserve the beautiful canopy trees along Benedict Canyon Drive. The list goes on. We can't do this alone, we need to have our residents behind us in support of the work we do. Come to a monthly Board meeting to find out more, ask questions and participate. We'd love to meet each of you in person: second Monday of the month, 7PM, Beverly Hills Women's Club, southwest corner of Benedict Canyon and Chevy Chase. Enjoy free parking and refreshments.

Now is the time for all residents to come to the aid of our Canyon. We look forward to a successful 2012 together, united as one community, under our beautiful canopy trees.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nickie Miner".

Nickie Miner,
President, Benedict Canyon Association



Benedict Canyon Association

OUR MISSION:

To promote, advance, further and protect the community interests and general welfare of the homeowners and residents residing in the general area of Benedict Canyon Drive.

WHO ARE WE?

We are a 100% volunteer organization made up of area residents.
All of our work is funded by donations. We are not sanctioned by any entity.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Monitor ongoing projects, programs and policies by private entities and city agencies outside our area which may impact or set precedent for land use and development within the canyon.

Monitor crime, safety, traffic, development and quality of life in the canyon.

We have four seats on the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council,
an officially recognized component of our city government.

We have one executive seat on The Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations.

Preservation and beautification of our Canyon.

WHAT DO WE PROVIDE FOR OUR MEMBERS?

Annual meeting for members at the Beverly Hills Hotel

Monthly meetings open to the public at the Beverly Hills Women's Club

Representation at greater Los Angeles civic meetings

Representation at the West Los Angeles division of LAPD

Emergency preparedness information

Regularly published newsletter

Hotline: (310) 553-4BCA

Website: www.benedictcanyon.org

WHEN AND WHERE DO WE MEET?

The Second Monday of every month

Beverly Hills Women's Club

(Benedict Canyon Drive @ Chevy Chase Drive)

7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

Open to the public

Free parking

Refreshments

Where's The Fire?

Interview with Captain Michael Coleman – Fire Station #71

by Vera Dunn

Wearing what I hoped to be my most professional journalistic smile, I strode up to the front door of Fire Station #71 on a cloudy Los Angeles day. With my best camera slung over my shoulder, and my note pad clutched to my chest, I was rehearsing what I hoped would be an interesting lead-in question for my interview with Captain Michael Coleman. Suddenly, a fire truck came screeching around the corner pulling up and stopping abruptly a few feet in front of me. A fireman leaped out running to shut the firehouse door yelling, "We are on a run!" I jumped aside as I hurriedly explained that I was looking for Captain Coleman. "I'm Captain Coleman. I can't talk now," he exclaimed as I watched the fire truck speed away.

All of this took place in less than a minute. What I planned as a leisurely interview quickly turned into a demonstration of what a fireman's job really is. It is to be on point and ready to respond at any time. It is to have adrenalin flowing; all systems go and the readiness to fight the fire or other emergency around the corner or across the hill.

It is far more than a job, or a career, it is an all-encompassing way of life. It is not for the timid or faint of heart, as it requires incredible strength, endurance and focus, combined with a willingness to put one's life on the line at a moment's notice. This does not make a fireman's boots easy to fill.

When I finally did get my opportunity to interview Captain Coleman two months after this failed first attempt, I learned that he not only fulfilled these basic requirements, but far surpassed them in every way. He has spent 25 years in his chosen profession, but to him it remains exciting because he never knows what the next call will bring.

Captain Coleman began by relating one of his most devastating calls. He was called to a scene where a boy was hit by a dump truck and...just as he was about to launch into the story... the red phone on his desk rang sharply. He jumped out of his chair, "We've got a call." He politely hurried me out while setting a third date to finish the interview, but not before he showed me his wall calendar that had eight different dates circled with my name on it. Each one represented a

time we had attempted to set up an interview but were interrupted by his real job of answering emergency calls.

So, once again, our interview was cut short with the promise to set yet another date to continue.

I was beginning to see a pattern here. A fireman's life is unpredictable and always vulnerable to change. In short, his life is not his own, but rather he is a true servant of the community. So, to be any part of a fireman's life, even a small part as an interviewer, you have to be open and able to go with the flow of the ever changing and constant demands of his daily existence.



Captain Michael Coleman

A few weeks later, I was able to get back to Captain Coleman's story. A young boy had been hit by a dump truck that had lost its brakes. The boy had been killed instantly. His father, who had been with him, was understandably in complete shock. The boy's mother had been notified and was running toward the scene of the accident when Captain Coleman and his crew arrived. What he saw as he ran toward the distraught mother and father was complete panic and utter chaos. Within minutes Captain Coleman managed to coral

both the mother and father, and persuade them to calm down and work together to ease each other's pain. As one might imagine this was no easy feat, but Captain Coleman's years of experience gave him the skills and tools to get the job done.

The next incident Captain Coleman related to me, also demonstrated the necessity of a quick response. A man had been hit by a car and was pinned against a building. A large plate glass window had shattered and was hanging precariously in sharp shards directly above his head. In order for Captain Coleman and his men to get the man safely out of this position it was necessary to convince him not to move, which was no simple request given the position he was in. Somehow, Captain Coleman assessed the situation quickly and persuaded the man not only to remain motionless but also not to look up to see the "glass guillotine" suspended over his head. Because Captain Coleman was able to instantly establish a bond of trust, the endangered man fol-

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Cont. from pg. 1

front of my house for a week asking the same questions, sometimes barely bothering to change verbs; “What did the body look like?” “Can you describe the body?” “Paint us a picture of what you saw, you know, her body?” For the first time in my life, I had sympathy for paparazzi prey.

I’ve learned a lot about human nature since then. It’s rather disappointing. There’s a story here, but it’s not what you may have read in the media.

Why did Yvette die like this? Where were her family and friends? Why were her compact fluorescent light bulbs, space heater and computer monitor still on if she hadn’t paid the bills for nearly a year? Why was her phone ringing on the very day I found her? Someone was trying to contact her even then, but who? Why didn’t the neighbors directly across the street and next door smell anything or care enough to check on her? Why was her mailbox only halfway full if she died sometime between June and August of 2010? Why didn’t our mail carrier alert anyone? Did she leave a will? In the end, did anyone really care about Yvette, or was she truly “famous and forgotten”?

I’ve never found a dead body before so I had no idea that I’d feel such a gnawing sense of responsibility to answer some of these questions. If you read the article in the LA Times on line, you may have seen some of the readers’ comments posted about the “horrible neighbors” and “her miserable family leaving her alone to die such a tragic death”. This comment pretty much sums it up: “*I condemn all of those who knew her and never bothered themselves to see if she was okay. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves*”. Many people all over the world expressed similar sentiments, perhaps some of you may have too. So, for

those of you who may have lingering questions about the circumstances of Yvette’s death, I will do my best to answer them.

Why was the power still on? I had the same question. Her account had not been set up to be paid automatically, so why wasn’t the power shut off? I know this for a fact, because I saw her last exorbitant DWP bill. It was in her mailbox and it was current. I have since learned that when you get to a certain age (Yvette was 82), the DWP doesn’t automatically shut off your power even if you haven’t paid your bill in months. Is this perhaps a courtesy to senior citizens? The power had been on all that time, including a little white space heater that I had shut off. It’s amazing it didn’t burn down the house. For the record, until very recently, the lights were still on, leading those neighbors living closest to her to believe that she was okay.

Why was the mailbox only halfway full? Why wasn’t it overflowing with mail since she had been dead nearly a year? As it turns out, Yvette went on vacation to visit friends in New Jersey in April 2010. She filed a vacation hold notice with the post office. No one is certain when she returned. She never contacted the post office to resume her mail. Hence, her mailbox was NOT overflowing with mail as it would have been. If it had been, I’ve no doubt her immediate neighbors or, for that matter, anyone passing by her house would have noticed something was wrong a lot sooner.

However, as there was a vacation hold, why was any mail delivered at all? Apparently, a few pieces of mail did occasionally get through over those many months, when our regular mail carrier had her day off. I gather the replacement doesn’t seem to pay much attention to vacation holds, mail stop notices or even addresses.

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WHERE'S THE FIRE. . .

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lowed his instructions and was rescued from a potentially lethal situation while sustaining only minor injuries.

Although these stories are captivating and interesting, they actually are brought to life by the power and presence of the man himself. Captain Coleman is a large and imposing man. His eyes are serious and direct. He has a no nonsense attitude about his job. There is just a hint of a smile that creeps across his face and a faint glint in his eyes when he talks, which serve to soften his otherwise somewhat direct demeanor. He wears his uniform with an ease and casual elegance that gives one the impression that this job was created for him. Sitting in his presence, I had the feeling that no challenge would be too tough for him to handle. He

seems completely comfortable and secure in his ability to perform his duties without a hitch. Although it is obvious that Captain Coleman loves his job and it is perfectly suited to him, I can’t imagine what it would be like to have a job where you had to be in a constant state of alert and flexible enough to respond to ever shifting circumstances and schedules. Most of us, me included, take solace in knowing our schedules and plans far in advance. Our routine and predictability allow us to comfortably plan not only our day but our lives. My schedule is often planned as far as a year or two in advance. It was challenging enough for me to have to make several attempts just to get an interview with Captain Coleman. I can’t imagine what it would be like to respond and shift all plans from moment to moment depending on the emergency that arises. Yet, that is exactly what Captan Coleman and the men at fire station #71 do on a daily basis. ■

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Several disparaging comments were directed viciously at the mail carrier as to why she didn't alert anyone. The fact is, she did. She left several notes in Yvette's mailbox asking her to call her directly at the post office. I know this because, as I was waiting for our local Fire Dept. 99 and the LAPD to arrive, I wanted to make myself useful, so I started pulling Yvette's mail out of her mailbox and began sorting. That's when I found the mail carrier's notes along with several other notes from concerned neighbors. Beyond writing notes, the mail carrier knocked on Yvette's triple locked front gate many times over these months, and also she spoke directly with neighbors asking if anyone had seen her. No one had, apparently. But after speaking with the mail carrier, another neighbor grew concerned and took it upon herself to investigate. She also left a note for Yvette and started knocking on the doors of the houses next to Yvette's. Only one neighbor was home, a couple who lived diagonally across the street from Yvette. "Yvette regularly goes to Las Vegas", he said. As he didn't seem concerned in the slightest, this information was relayed to the mail carrier, which, I assume, must have assuaged any worries. In response to police questioning, another neighbor said, "we used to always know when Yvette was up, because we could hear her music or TV blaring away." It begs the question, if you hadn't heard anything in at least ten months, wouldn't you be a little concerned?

Our mail carrier never said anything to me about Yvette's "vacation hold" until that day, crying as she told me, "I knew something was wrong. I knew it."

While we're on the subject of the immediate neighbors, why didn't they smell anything? When I asked the police about that myself, they said "you would have noticed the smell the first month, but then it would've dissipated." From the moment I entered Yvette's house, I kept breathing deeply to see if I could smell anything, I couldn't. Yvette's house is a two-story, rustic dwelling set off from the street, draped over with ivy and bougainvillea and the grounds are overgrown with foliage. I found Yvette on the second floor. The windows were slightly ajar on both floors. So perhaps, because of the open windows and the height of her house, you couldn't detect anything from the street. The vegetation may have also acted as a filter.

There was a sign that I misread as well. Several weeks prior to my finding Yvette, new phone books were delivered to the residents of Westwanda and Reevesbury. As I walked my dogs up the street past Yvette's house, I noticed her phone books were in front of her garage for a while. Since they were delivered in orange plastic bags, they caught my attention. However, as Yvette wasn't the only neighbor who hadn't bothered to take hers in, I wasn't overly concerned,

but I did notice. Then one day the phone books were gone. I assumed Yvette had taken them in and everything was okay.

It wasn't until that day, while sorting her mail, that I learned the truth. As I categorized her bills and letters, I decided to pitch the obvious junk mail. When I opened her black garbage bin and discovered the orange plastic bags with Yvette's phone books, I realized that what I took as a sign that she was okay, was clearly wrong. This would not have changed the cause of death, but maybe I would have found her sooner.

Why was the phone ringing that day? We will never know who was calling but the real question is why did she still have an active phone line if she hadn't paid her bill in over a year? The police answered this question too. They told me even if you haven't paid your phone bill in months, the phone company will not turn off your landline as they want to make sure you can still call 911. This only applies to landlines, not cell phones.

This may answer some of the logistical questions, but it doesn't answer the family and friends questions. Where were they? In the end, did anyone care about Yvette? The simple answer is yes; however, it may not be that simple. Yvette was, by her own choice, a reclusive woman. I had known Yvette since 1992, but I can't say I really knew her. Our dogs, Garbo and Orson used to play together many years ago, but when her dog, Garbo, died I didn't see her much after that. Thinking back on their names, maybe we had a little more in common than I initially thought. But on that rare occasion when we would speak, Yvette wanted only to tell me about *the people parked in front of her house who were stalking her*. After a half dozen conversations like that, I decided to keep my distance.

I'm happy to say, Yvette did reach out to a handful of neighbors on the street. Some neighbors bought groceries for her; the neighbor above her trimmed her hedges and fixed her sprinklers and another neighbor even got her out of her house to attend a Neighborhood Watch meeting four years ago. To my knowledge, in the past five years, only one neighbor was actually invited into her house.

When Yvette left town in April 2010, no one knew she was gone because she didn't tell anyone. Again, this was confirmed by the many neighbors' notes I found in her mailbox asking for her to give them a call. Her absence did not go unnoticed in spite of what you may have read.

I believe many people cared about Yvette. I've spoken with her cousins in California, Arizona and Missouri, and all freely shared their stories with me. But it was her cousin, Rosalee, who was able to shed some light as to what forever estranged Yvette from her family. It was Yvette who chose to cut off her family, not the other way around.

This seems to be a recurring theme throughout Yvette's

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life. In my search to find Yvette's next of kin, I encountered this same abrupt severing of quite a few relationships. Yvette slowly but irrevocably seemed to cut loose anyone who really knew her. She compartmentalized her friendships, all her relationships for that matter. It seems that, piecing together the mosaic of Yvette's life, I've become the repository of so many stories. Ironically, I've come to know Yvette better in death than I ever did in life and I've grown incredibly fond of her.

This is a tragic story in any neighborhood. If there had been better communication on all sides, I believe Yvette would not have been alone when she died and certainly not undiscovered for so long. Unfortunately, given what I learned about her life and her behavior, her prophetic ending was written long ago. But we have an opportunity to write a different ending for ourselves and for our neighbors.

- 1) Get to know your neighbors, especially the standoffish, reclusive or older ones. If they're anything like Yvette, they might regale you with fascinating stories for hours. Yvette worked on the first film that James Cagney ever directed. She dated Lee Marvin, Cary Grant and several of my neighbors.
- 2) Put together a Neighborhood Watch including names, addresses, phone numbers and contact numbers.
- 3) Even if the lights are on at your neighbor's house, that doesn't mean everything's okay. Call and check in on them. Knock if you don't get a response.
- 4) Just because the mailbox is only halfway full doesn't mean everything's okay. Go and check in person to make sure. Talk to your postal carrier. Maybe he or she can enlighten you about your neighbor's whereabouts.
- 5) If your neighbor's habits include a loud TV or stereo and you become aware that the noise has stopped, it's time to check.
- 6) When the ivy, bougainvillea, etc., are so overgrown that your neighbor's front entrance is no longer passable, it's also time to pay a visit.
- 7) If all else fails, call LAPD and request a "Welfare Visit".
- 8) Remember, communication is a two-way street. If you are an older resident presently living alone in Benedict Canyon, seek out at least one neighbor. Develop a relationship with them and hopefully establish trust. So the next time you go on vacation, you'll feel comfortable enough to let them know. And of course, also let them know when you plan to return.

It's hard to imagine that in this age of computers, cell phones and instant messaging that a neighbor living next door can go literally unnoticed for a year, but yet, it happened. Despite everyone's best intentions, a tragedy occurred. As a neighborhood and a community we may have failed Yvette but, perhaps, because of Yvette, this may never happen again. Let's hope. ■

Bark, Bark, Ka-Ching, Ka-Ching Your Barking Dog Will Cost You

by Barbara Nichols



The Los Angeles City Council and the Mayor have signed into law new regulations regarding filing complaints about barking dogs and have established some stiffer penalties for the owners of offending dogs.

New Ordinance: Sec. 53.63 Barking Dog Noise

"It shall be unlawful for any person to permit any dog or dogs under his or her charge, care, custody or control to emit any excessive noise after the Department has issued a written notice advising the owner or custodian of the alleged noise and the procedures as set forth below have been followed. For purposes of this section, the term "excessive noise" shall mean noise which is unreasonably annoying, disturbing, offensive, or which unreasonably interferes with

the comfortable enjoyment of life or property of one or more persons occupying property in the community or neighborhood within reasonable proximity to the property where the dog or dogs are kept. The noise must be continually audible for 10 minutes or intermittently audible for 30 minutes within a 3 hour period."

If a neighbor complains and nothing is done they can request a hearing by sending a letter to Animal Control. Upon receiving a written complaint involving a whining, barking, howling or similar dog noise, the Department shall issue a written notice to the owner advising that person of the noise complaint and requesting immediate abatement of any excessive noise. Animal

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New Board Member: Hillary Slevin

Hillary Slevin moved to The Canyon in November 2009 after falling in love with a home built in 1938 on Easton Drive. She spent eighteen months restoring the home which had fallen into disrepair after remaining vacant for several years. During this process, she got to know her many wonderful neighbors who often came by to check on her progress and offer their opinions on what she was doing to the house. Some of the residents had lived on the street for more than fifty years, and they told her many stories about her home and how it had evolved over the years. She quickly realized that Benedict Canyon is different from most areas of Los Angeles. Life moves at a slower pace and people get to know their neighbors. An entire weekend can be happily spent tending our gardens and enjoying the wildlife.



Hillary became involved with the BCA after developers started installing a large wall at the end of Easton Drive. Hillary is an attorney and she gathered a group of neighbors to negotiate with the developer to reach a solution that met the needs of both the developer who owned the land and the residents who valued the tranquility and beauty of their street. She was invited to join the Board of the BCA and was delighted to be able to work for an organization that had done so much to preserve the lifestyle of The Canyon. By working on the Board she hopes to contribute to the work of the BCA to expand the membership base and preserve wildlife in our Canyon. She also hopes to work to find solutions to development issues that allow progress while still maintaining the character and beauty of Benedict Canyon in the years to come. ■



Squirreled Away

by Nickie Miner

One recent morning, the incessant barking of our seven-pound terrier called attention to an intruder in the shrubs bordering our patio. When we parted the bushes, we saw a wild creature measuring a mere three inches in length. Frightened by the barking, though unharmed, she never moved. She sat as if transfixed by the rowdy dog and the huge humans. We quickly put our dog inside and came back to the baby animal with what we thought she would like most, hazelnuts. She enthusiastically ate her premium offering while we tried to determine how best to handle the rescue of this tiny tyke. We named her Sweetie. We were in love with a squirrel.

Three days passed. It was obvious this adorable squirrel couldn't climb a tree and that she had no mother. Every morning she scampered away under the gate but returned to the patio each afternoon. On the fourth day it began to rain and we panicked for Sweetie's safety. Unsuccessful in our search for help, it occurred to me to contact Paul Garrigo, who had graciously come to a BCA board meeting to talk about his work as a volunteer Reserve Animal Control Officer.

Paul put me in touch with Mike Bell, a Valley Wildlife Care board member, a man with a big heart who does incredible work to save animals and birds. Mike traveled from the West Valley to hold our hands and help us. Together, we contained little Sweetie in a big box with breathing holes, phoned Marcia Rybak's Coast and Canyon Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization in Malibu and contacted the Westside Animal Shelter. A transporter soon arrived to take Sweetie from our yard to the Shelter. Another transporter, from Marcia Rybak's organization, then brought our little squirrel from the Shelter to Malibu. The amazing Marcia rescued Sweetie just in time, as our baby squirrel was dehydrated and bug infested. It was touch and go for several days, but to our relief, Sweetie was nursed back to health and eventually set free in the wild with other "teenage" squirrels that had been in Marcia's care.

All this for one little generic squirrel. People do care.

Our lesson learned is that we are stewards of the creatures we live with in our wonderful hillsides. We must not take them for granted. We are responsible to protect and respect our wildlife by learning how to preserve their habitat, be cognizant of their needs and help animals in distress. There is always more to learn about our Canyon neighbors. ■



Benedict Canyon

BENEDICT CANYON ASSOCIATION 2012 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I want to help protect and preserve our canyon and the environment in which we live and express my support by joining the Benedict Canyon Association at the following membership level:

- \$1000+ Oak Tree
- \$500 Sycamore Tree
- \$250 Eucalyptus Tree
- \$100 Pine Tree
- \$75 Basic Membership

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

Benedict Canyon Association mailing lists are strictly confidential and are never sold or shared.

I do not wish my name to appear in the BCA Newsletter, but please accept my enclosed contribution.

You can become a member of BCA through Basic Membership or as part of our "Trees of Support" Donor Program. Many members are choosing to designate their membership "In Honor of..." or "Memory of..." for someone who used to live in Benedict Canyon, a beloved family pet or anyone whom you would like to honor in this special way. Basic Membership names will not be published. Also, you may contribute at the donor level and elect not to have your name published. Benedict Canyon is protected only through your individual contributions. Thank you for supporting your community.

For membership information, please call our Hotline - (310) 553-4BCA(4222)
Benedict Canyon Association is a non-profit organization.

My payment of \$ _____ is made by:

Check payable to Benedict Canyon Association

Please charge my VISA MasterCard AMEX

Card# _____ Exp. date _____

Name as it appears on card _____

Signature _____

Please return this application along with your payment to:
Benedict Canyon Association, P.O. Box 1265, Beverly Hills, CA 90213

2012



Cut On Dotted Line



Benedict Canyon

2011 BCA "Trees of Support" Donor Program Roster

OAK TREE

Bruce & Martha Karsh
Linell Shapiro
Diane Sherman Smith

SYCAMORE TREE

Alex & Yuki Bouzari
In Memory of Gero & Bella
Gary Hecker
Rodney Kemerer & Lindsay Doran
Rob Krieger
Michael J. Libow
Beverly Sassoon
Mark S. Siegel
(4) Anonymous

EUCALYPTUS TREE

Jacqueline Bisset
Michael Chasteen
Hal Cooper
Ken & Randee Devlin
Vera Dunn
David & Barbara Elson
Burton & Nanette Forester
Evans Frankenheimer
Urban S. Hirsch, III
Paul & Renee Haas
Stanley & Miriam Handman
Lee Ann Jacobs
Barbara Jaynes
Gertrude Kline
Ian La Frenais
Gene A. Lucero & Marcia E. Williams
Stephen Maitland-Lewis & Joni Berry
Armand Marciano
Margaret Maw
Greg & Nancy Meidel
Larry & Nickie Miner
Eustace Moore
Mark & Irene Montgomery
Jimmy & Anne Murphy
Anthony E. Nicholas
Fred & Joan Nicholas
Rick Nicita & Paula Wagner
Hugh & Virginia O'Brian
Brad O'Leary
Kevin & Elizabeth Parry
Jacqueline Patterson
Matthew & Brittney Post
Steven Rosenwasser & Kelli Sager
Albert Ruddy & Wanda McDaniel
Lew & Joanne Savage

Gene & Myrna Schwam
Bobby Schwartz & Karen Breslow
Sheldon & Andrea Shapiro
In Memory of
Alexander and Eugenia Shlain
Hillary Slevin
Art & Renee Spence
Lev L. Spiro & Melissa Rosenberg
Larry Steinman & Lucy Suzar
Joe & Marjorie Walsh
Don & Cynthia Wyse
(3) Anonymous

PINE TREE

Robert and Maria Abeloff
Shan and Linda Afcharieh
Michael & Elaine Agran
Jim Anderson & Lynn Fireside
Steve Badeau & Jim McConville
Stephen Baker
Steven Bradley Beer
David & Eithne Berger
George A. & Carolyn Bender
Gary F. Bird
Paul & Marie-France Bloch
Ronald Boldt & Judith Shelton
Ellen Brown
Celia Anne Browne
Ron & Jan Cannan
Jeffrey & Judy Caren
Betty Chaplin
Eric Cleveland & Annette Stanton
Jeffrey & Rachel Cohen
Rafe & Susan Cohen
Robert & Joan Cohen
Alessio & Josephine Coppola
Francis & Eleanor Coppola
Ted & Karen Coyne
Mark & Margaret Damon
Carmen N. D'Angelo Jr.
Eddie W. De Ochoa & Denise Anthony
Morris & Marlene Dennis
Joe DiStefano & Beth Rubin
Laurence & Judith Dornstein
Joseph A. & Marilyn Eisenberg
Michael & Lori Eisenberg
Cy & Gail Evangelidi
Ferdinand & Lennie Fam
Judith L. Feder
Ruth Felmus
Sandy Fenmore
Alan G. Fine
Henry & Julie Fisher
Philip Forte
Sidney & Linda Furie

Evelyn Furtak-Dorfman
James & Donna Gallagher
Marvin & Inger Gross
Carla Hacken & Lorraine Gallacher
Roger Halfhide & Patricia McVerry
Bill & Chris Harper
James & Jean Harris
Robert & Cynthia Hart
David & Bridget Hedison
Robert A. & Mary Herman
Edward & Sherry Heyman
Bruce & Lynn Heymont
Elizabeth Hirsch
Joshua Holland
Tom & Kathi Holland
David & Susan Horn
Terry Jackson
Len & Nancy Jacoby
Joel Jaffe
Julie Jaffe
Stuart & Shirley Stamen Jaffe
Elizabeth James
Ricky Jay & Chrisann Verges
Preston Johnson & Vickie Martin
Bernard Kester
Michael J. Kopcha
Rosa Koppens
Robert C. Kopple
Herb & Arlene Kramer
Don & Hope Kurz
Marvin & Patricia Lachman
Alan Landsburg
Lee Lasker
Brian LeSage & Afsaneh Malaekch
Howard & Carol Levy
Justine I. Linforth
Mark Liszt & Karyl Sisson
Mr. & Mrs. Mahdavi
Robert & Mindy Mann
Tom & Linda Markovitz
Sally Mason
Mike & Ana McLachlan
In Memory of Warren M. Meyerhoff
Ron Michaelson & Lucinda Cowell
Claudia Mirkin
Mary Ann Mobley
Ira & Bethany Moretski
Dagmar & Alex Moscowicz
Richard & Sandy Mosk
Maryann Musico
Maud Nadler
C.R. Neu & Virginia Ambrosini
Barbara Nichols
Art & Daniele Ochoa
Charles Ortner

William L. O'Toole
David Overton
Dick Perlman
Alan & Donna Perris
Gary & Nita Polinsky
John B. Power
Phil Proctor & Melinda Peterson
Max Ramberg
Stephen & Carol Randall
John Rieber & Alex Duda
Andrew & Kelly Robinson
Paul Rohrer
Gil & Val Romoff
Linda Rosen
In Memory of Sheldon Rosenfeld
Saul Rosenzweig & Gail Parent
Jim & Rachelle Rosten
Donald & Patti Ross
Larry & Sunny Russ
Joanne Sackheim
Christopher Saigal & Hollis Leech
John & Gayle Samore
Robert & Margaret Sanford
Steven & Leslie Schenkel
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schnair
Ken Schwartz
Samuel Schwartz
Arthur & Arlene Schwimmer
Martin & Sheila Seaton
Ron Shalowitz & David Bailey
Norm & Libby Shapiro
Sid & Lorraine Sheinberg
Betty Shelhamer
Barbara Shuler
Jay J. Silverman & Janet Wood
Mark Sklansky & Lauren Ina
Brent Smith & Lisa Engel
Cortez Smith
Stanley & Susan Sokoloff
Andrew Solt & Claudia Falkenburg
Bernard & Wendy Sparer
Jeff & Annie Stein
Beth Talbert
Bernadine Towns
In Memory of Dudley Trudgett
Robert J. Wagner
Brandt & Tobi Wax
Jacques & Lynne Wertheimer
James & Brooke Widdoes
John Winters
Lawrence & Nancy Wolf
Judy Wolfenstein
Phil Yaney & Jacqueline Keller
Gregory W. & Virginia S. Young
(6) Anonymous

Contributions received after December 31, 2011 will appear in our next publication



Escargot To Go

by Joanne Savage



The vandals had struck again! No, it wasn't spray painted graffiti, but rather mounds of soil, all that was left of the moss carefully planted between the patio stones in our courtyard. We had gone through months of replacing and replanting, only to find it dug up again each morning.

We first called the City of Los Angeles to ask if Animal Control could help, but since an animal was neither dead nor in distress, they would not offer assistance. "In that case, I might be needing you soon," I replied.

After trying many suggested home remedies: setting out water bottles, mixing human hair in with the soil, etc., with no success, we finally decided to call in a professional.

Jeremy has been helping homeowners with humane wildlife capture for over twelve years. "It's probably raccoons. They like the snails, worms and slugs to be found under the moss," he told us. He set out three cages that would enclose an animal once it entered. The next morning we had three very upset raccoons in cages and a fourth pacing back and forth between the traps. "It must be the mother worried about her kids," I fretted. The thing is, they

just look so darn cute it is hard to imagine that they are so destructive and the carriers of rabies and other diseases.

Jeremy picked up the cages a few hours later and left three more.

He recommended leaving the cages until we go five days without trapping any animals. Day two we had one more raccoon and day three another one. It is day five and raccoon number six greeted us this morning.

It is illegal to trap fur bearing animals in the State of California without a State Trapping License and also a professional must have the permission of the State Fish and Game Department in order to release trapped animals into another environment.

Jeremy related a story of a gardener who trapped a raccoon for a homeowner and immediately brought the animal to Animal Control as he was trying to do the right thing. The gardener was promptly slapped with a \$500.00 fine.

It's been two weeks since the last trap was picked up. We replanted our moss and were once again at peace with nature. But not for long. Within a week the moss was gone again but, cayenne pepper has solved the problem. ■

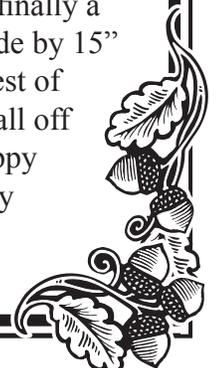


2012 BCA Membership Premium Gift



For the 2012 Benedict Canyon Association Membership Drive, the BCA Membership Committee is offering the best gift ever! We searched the world of backpacks/shoulder bags/ briefcases to find the perfect bag and now we can offer it to you exclusively. With your paid BCA 2012 Membership at the Eucalyptus Tree Level (\$250.00) and above, we will deliver to you an ingeniously designed bag that features hide-away backpack straps (for when you are hiking our beautiful Canyon), a detachable and adjustable shoulder strap for that "casual, busy person on-the-go look," and finally a sturdy top handle for that "slick-executive-briefcase style." This perfect bag measures 13" wide by 15" high by 6" deep and is constructed of 600D woven polyester with heavy vinyl backing. Best of all, it includes a special padded computer/tablet pouch in the main compartment. Topping it all off is a beautiful ivory colored embroidered BCA Logo on the front flap. You will be "one happy camper" while helping to protect Benedict Canyon. Supply is very limited so sign up today and become a proud 2012 BCA Member.

BCA Hotline: 310.553.4222 (4BCA) Website: www.BenedictCanyon.org



In My Canyon View

by Rodney Kemerer

“Norman Neale Williams A.K.A. Aron Kincaid”

It was late Thursday afternoon and all the trashcans on lower Easton Drive were still out on the street. As I turned onto Easton and saw the rows of cans, I finally knew, absolutely, that Aron was dead.

Aron Kincaid hated trashcans. Specifically, he hated trashcans left out more than one second after the trash was picked up in the morning. Later in his life, you could see him, undecorously in his nightshirt and slippers, dragging everyone's cans back into their storage spaces. This small gesture, on a neighborhood level, was part of a larger aesthetic that permeated Aron's life.

I first met Aron in 1978 when I moved to Benedict Canyon. My initial visit to his canyon hideaway house, which he called “Moonfleet”, was memorable to say the least. I can still recall the image of walking in the front door that day. His was the only house I had ever visited where nature and the outside world had been blended together into a personal interior space. Aron knew how to live with nature, and without knowing it, from that first visit in 1978 until the week he died, he was my teacher for living in The Canyon.

Anyone who had been to Aron's house never forgot it. The outside ivy creeping inside and snaking up the 25 foot fireplace, each window framed with draping vines, looking completely natural, yet, each one had been painstakingly positioned and wired in place. The color palette was pulled directly from nature. All browns, greens, gold, tans and burnt orange blended together so that the outside became the inside and vice versa. The actual line to the outside was erased as you would many times see a live red-tailed squirrel sitting on the table behind one of the sofas eating a whole walnut out of a hand-hammered copper bowl. It all appeared seamless and natural, yet was carefully crafted by Aron. If Disneyland had a Benedict Canyon ride, it would have been Aron's house. The line for “Moonfleet” starts here.

Over our thirty year friendship, Aron taught me a way of seeing The Canyon and nature that was unique. He showed me native plants that could be propagated simply by placing them in the ground. Yucca plants and Beavertail Cactus could be harvested from the hillsides and planted in your own yard. Aron's garden, while not large, was a lush canyon oasis grown from salvaged cuttings.

One afternoon on a trip down Beverly Glen, Aron suddenly pulled over to the side of the road to take cuttings from a large wild red geranium growing over a fence on a vacant lot. He filled his trunk with the bright red blossoms. More color for his home canvas. Aron had a unique talent for turning almost nothing into something. A pile of river rocks and a broken chair pulled from someone's trash and a few dried palm fronds suddenly were turned into a garden vignette, an inviting resting spot hidden in a forgotten corner of his homestead.

Like most people with an artistic temperament, there were extremes with Aron. Years ago when the blue recycling bins were introduced into The Canyon, Aron refused to have one. He said that the extreme blue color clashed with The Canyon. He sent his blue can back to the Department of Sanitation with a note explaining his rejection of the can.

One morning we were in his garage looking at some recent treasure-hunting find pulled from trash bins in the alleys of Beverly Hills. He opened the trunk of his car to show me dozens of illegally posted signs he had removed the night before from Benedict Canyon Drive; everything from tree trimming to tennis lessons to Christmas light installation. He felt that the signs were a blight on the beauty of The Canyon. By removing them he kept his landscape pristine and, at the same time, pristine for all of us.

Perhaps my favorite line, and the most revealing, came from Aron while sitting in bumper to bumper Los Angeles traffic one afternoon. After some time, not moving, just sitting, his impatience growing by the minute, he suddenly shouted to no one in particular, or perhaps to the entire City of Los Angeles at large, “What are all of you people doing just sitting here? Why aren't you all home making your houses more beautiful?” Exactly.

The last time I spent with Aron was the perfect ending to a relationship that was based on a shared



Drawing by Aron Kincaid

Cont. on next page

love of nature and The Canyon. He had come over to my house to pick up or drop something off. His health by this point had diminished him so that I knew he could not make the climb up the many steps to my house. I met him in the driveway and he never got out of the car. While we were talking, a large family of mule deer came down the hill into the backyard right next to his car, probably less than 15 feet away from us. We both watched the deer grazing on assorted ivy and other landscaping. We said very little to each other, each understanding our shared amazement and joy of living so close to nature. We watched the deer for more than 30 minutes. They slowly worked their way back up the hill and disappeared. Aron smiled, said goodbye and drove off. It was a perfect life moment. I would never see Aron again but I see the deer every day. ■

One Voice Counts You Too Can Make a Difference

by Barbara Blinderman

Sometimes one person can do something about a legitimate complaint dealing with the way government does business. Once you start the process, you must gather all the facts, stay focused, remain patient and stay involved as the issue goes through the bureaucracy. With the help of a responsive legislator, you may be surprised at the good results.

Here are two recent efforts that may encourage you to be your own advocate. The challenge is to stick with it.

I. PUBLIC RECORDS. 1998 – 2006. State Senator Sheila Kuehl and the California Attorney General.

In the spring of 1998 I saw some core drilling equipment on top of the hill behind my house. Thinking it would be a good idea to ask my own geologist to review any reports a developer had submitted to the city, I sent a public records request to the Department of Building and Safety asking to see all technical reports in the city's file. The response was that nothing had been approved, and the records weren't available to the public until the department approved the reports.

Wait a second, I thought, that's not what the California Public Records Act says. What good does it do if the reports need some modification in order to protect me if we couldn't do anything until after the developer had a permit approval and started grading? Sorry, I was told, that's how Building and Safety does it. The City Attorney didn't have anything to add. So, after many attempts to convince the city, I wrote to California State Senator Kuehl. She asked the Attorney General (AG) for an opinion. Legislators, but not members of the public, can ask for a formal opinion from the AG. I then asked the California First Amendment Coalition and the California Newspaper Association, two organizations which are very interested in the public's access to government files, to file comments with the AG. It is permitted to do this while the Attorney General's Office is considering the issue. The Bel Air- Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council followed suit as they too are always interested in get-

ting information before something becomes a fait-accompli, especially when it comes to grading in the hills.

It took lots of requests, letters, phone calls, e-mails and a State Senator who understood the importance of access to government laws, but, finally, on February 28, 2006, 89 Ops Cal Att Gen 39 (No. 05-1004) was published. It stated the question and then summarized the report's conclusion: **"Are interim grading documents, including geology reports, compaction reports, and soils reports, submitted by a property owner to a city's building department in conjunction with an application for a building permit subject to public inspection and copying under the California Public Records Act at the time the documents are first received by the building department?"**



CONCLUSION

"Interim grading documents, including geology reports, compaction reports, and soils reports submitted by a property owner to a city's building department in conjunction with an application for a building permit are subject to public inspection and copying under the California Public Records Act at the time the documents are first received by the building department."

So next time a bulldozer fires up next to your bedroom, tell the city that the Attorney General says you can see the reports, and tell them it says so at 89 Ops Cal Att. Gen 39 (05-1004 Year 2006). The law is on your side.

II. DWP BILLS. 2009-2010. Councilmember Jan Perry and the DWP.

Cont. pg. 19

Bandits In Our Midst

by MaryAnn Musico

Raccoons are sometimes referred to as “bandit-faced” due to the black masks on their fox-like faces. This is because of the wide patches of black fur around their eyes and across their cheeks. Their tails are short and bushy and black-ringed. Seeing one or more of them staring into your home from your yard may be startling as they usually appear at night. Thanks to their playful, creative antics, it is easy to personalize them in a sort of “Disney-esque” fashion. But beware, it is best to be very cautious and informed about these wildlife neighbors.

These furry creatures classically live in hollow trees or rocky dens. As humans develop the land, they may encroach closer to raccoon dens nearer to residences. Raccoons have been known to seek refuge under houses, in attics and open sub structures. They leave their dens to seek food in nocturnal hunts. When rodents, fruit, grains, etc. aren’t readily available, they welcome pet food left outside or garbage, easily found when can lids are left loose. With their human-like hands, their paws have helped them enter homes via pet doors or even front doors. A spilled box of cereal or other food is evidence of such a break-in. They will virtually eat anything they can find. Traditionally, in the wild they wash their food in available water, so when not near a natural water source they will often simulate washing what they find.

Adult raccoons have litters of cubs in the spring. They often travel with their cute cubs which make them



Drawing by Jack Seery

tempting to approach. Beware, however, a mother will protect her young and she can be ferocious. A male raccoon lives in the den during the mating season and leaves before the babies are born. Males are loners. The mother raccoon stays with the babies until they are about 16 weeks of age when they are weaned and must seek their own food.

Raccoons have territories. They also have enemies: coyotes, cougars and their most serious enemies, man and dogs. They will defend themselves with their sharp teeth, including four long canines, if they are cornered. If they think they are threatened, a raccoon will fight; therefore, you should exercise caution if you are out walking your pet and encounter a wild raccoon.

Of all the wildlife that we have here in Benedict Canyon, I vote for the raccoon as the one with the most personality. While they have been found to be destructive by digging up gardens and pulling off roof shingles in search of insects, they can also be most amazing in their more harmless activities.

Here are a few raccoon “tails”:

A canyon resident in the Hollywood hills kept hearing strange noises in the walls and his first thought was that the place was haunted. Eventually the landlord let him open the wall to find a baby raccoon which must have fallen through a gap in the roof. No mother was found, so he adopted the cub and named him Rocky. That seemed the humane thing to do. Even though the man who found the cub

had a zoology background, taking in a wild animal was not a good idea. Rocky grew up to be quite creative and soon was opening up medicine cabinets and kitchen cupboards. He was not a controllable pet.

Another Benedict Canyon resident heard water running outside but no one was out there, or so she thought. She walked toward the open kitchen and was shocked to see a stream of water pouring into the room. The hose was being held by a raccoon. He had managed to turn on the hose and aim it into the house. Every night, this resident’s husband brought leftover food like Kentucky Fried Chicken from the studios where he worked. He put the food on the patio and turned on the floodlights. This created a virtual wildlife party scene as the raccoons, foxes and other animals got the message of the free spread and came to feast. I imagine one of these raccoons, who frequented the property, was the culprit who turned on the hose. This was an interesting example of how befriending wildlife can back-fire. The Department of Animal

Cont. on next page

A Letter to Our Editor

The Benedict Canyon Association, like many volunteer organizations, depends upon those individuals who are passionate about the goals of the group and do so much of the actual work. We have such a member in Rodney Kemerer who joined the BCA board twenty-four years ago.

In those early days of the BCA, we did all aspects of the mailings ourselves. Letters and notices to the community, as well as our Newsletters, were run off on our own copy machines, and then brought to a member's home where they were folded, stuffed and addressed, all by hand! It was a tedious job and took forever. One day, along came a young fellow by the name of Rodney Kemerer, and suddenly the mailing parties were not boring anymore because Rodney kept us laughing.

Through the years, Rodney's creativity and resourcefulness have been a terrific asset to the Benedict Canyon Community. He has put in hundreds of hours each year to produce the BCA Newsletter that we in the community are all so proud of. As publisher and editor, he elevated the Newsletter from a bi-fold hand-out to the informative publication that is now read not only by residents of Benedict Canyon but by City and State officials and residents of other hillside communities.

Rodney also created and developed our Donor and Premium Gift Program, negotiated the leaf-blower and dog barking ordinances, and brought about brush clearance record-keeping at the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.



Along with other board members, he helped to save the 90210 zip code for BHPO residents. He also coordinated with the website designer to make sure our Web-page matched our Newsletter and initiated our financial planning system, insisted on a balanced budget and brought us into the black.

A few years ago, Rodney noticed that one of our two iconic wooden BCA signs that welcome visitors to Benedict Canyon was missing. These signs had been designed and hand-crafted many years ago by the revered landscape architect and Benedict Canyon resident, Dudley Trudgett. As soon as Rodney noticed that the sign was gone, he took it upon himself to seek out an artisan to make an exact reproduction of the remaining sign and then re-installed both signs. That's the kind of guy Rodney is. And on top of all that, he has graciously opened up his elegantly restored historic home, The George R. Kress House, for many Canyon events.

Rodney has given not only his time but his heart to our Association. With so much work completed, he has asked for a well-deserved hiatus. We will miss the engine (and the humor) that has kept us chugging for so many years. We are hopeful that this will be a short-lived timeout, Rodney. Your regular seat in the back is saved for your return. ■

With Gratitude,
The Executive Committee
Benedict Canyon Association Board of Directors

BANDITS . . . *Cont. from pg. 14*

Regulation does not recommend that people feed the wildlife as it creates dependency and more close contact with humans than is desirable.

Another couple in Benedict Canyon put out food every evening for the raccoons, well meaning, of course. They left a dinner bell on the porch

and rang it to invite the animals to eat. The clever raccoons soon learned the routine. Late one night they heard bells ringing far up the hillside above their home. This continued and they couldn't identify the source until they noticed the dinner bell was missing. The raccoons had taken it to their den and were mimicking the routine, probably in hopes that their dinner would be "home delivered".

There are many other stories about raccoons which certainly illustrate the fact that they are indeed very colorful, charming animals. It is important to realize, however, that they are our wild neighbors who are surviving in a natural habitat which is shrinking. We can co-exist as long as we demonstrate our respect for them by keeping appropriate boundaries and admiring them from a distance. ■

It Comes in Trees

by Joanne Savage

“Your *Pittosporum* is dying”. The diagnosis came from trimmer and general tree expert for the past 31 years, Michael Jimenez. The patient was, unfortunately, the 20 foot high, multi-trunked tree that bent so gracefully over our patio providing both shade and beauty. He pointed out the yellowing leaves and told me it was only a matter of time, no cure, nothing to do but wait. Tree hospice began.

As the years passed, all of the anticipated symptoms became more obvious: dropping leaves and excessive fruit pointed to the inevitable end until, finally, this spring, Jimenez had to cut down the bare and weakened tree trunk.

Pittosporum trees, also known as “Mock Orange”, are not indigenous to Southern California but became widely popular in the 40’s and 50’s when developers of big estates brought them in, often to divide the house from the pool area. These trees are evergreen with nice white blossoms and a fragrant orange scent. They need no trimming and are drought resistant. As time passed, landscape architects wanted to put their own stamp on new designs and *Pittosporum* gradually became less fashionable. More modern hardscapes were mixed with the landscape to blend the house and garden incorporating either more angular hedges or free flowing English gardens. Because *Pittosporum* are

self propagating, due in part to their berry droppings, they are now sadly thought of as more of a weed.

According to Jimenez, he began to notice ground fungus affecting *Pittosporum* about 10 years ago. He believes this was due to an increase in land development in the area which resulted in overturned soil often burying part of the trunk. In addition, over-irrigation from automatic sprinklers kept the bases of these trunks moist which promoted the growth of fungus. Times of heavy rain can be especially problematic as drainage can carry ground water with fungus to the particularly susceptible *Pittosporum*. The tree may develop a musty, mushroom smell as further evidence of the dreaded presence of fungus.

We, in The Canyon, have lost a number of our *Pittosporum* trees to fungus. This can take as long as eight years or as few as one, depending on the amount of rain and irrigation. But many of our Canyon *Pittosporum* have been eliminated by developers, who remove them in favor of more stylish and less messy trees.

The death of the *Pittosporum*, as it turns out, is only one of three tree diseases currently plaguing Los Angeles and residents of Benedict Canyon, in particular.

A second tree illness noticeable in The Canyon is the Fire Blight which attacks our Flowering Pear

Trees. Transmitted primarily by birds and bees, this disease, while not fatal, causes the usually glossy green leaves to turn red or yellow at the outer limbs. Fortunately, the beauty of these trees, which are drenched in blossoms each spring, can be saved. The branches can be trimmed to get rid of the Blight. This, however, may not be as simple as it sounds. A savvy gardener must sterilize his tools between each cut to avoid spreading the disease, not a quick or easy fix. Consider carefully experts who may advertise a spray treatment to retard the blight but not eradicate it. This is very contagious and other infected trees in the neighborhood will cause the return of the blight. Without the proper cutting and sterilization process and neighborhood awareness you may be wasting your money.

Finally, Jimenez offered a dire prognosis for our Brazilian and California Pepper Trees. Once again a fungus problem will cause an inordinate amount of berry or pepper droppings and the trees will die. Alas, no proven cure is available to prevent these trees from succumbing to the inevitable.

The beauty of our trees is one of the things that makes our Canyon so special and differentiates us from other areas of the City. They are important to Canyon living. Learning how to care for them and help them thrive will preserve our Canyon’s character for generations to come. ■

www.benedictcanyon.org

No More McMansions in Benedict Canyon For Those Who Don't Already Have One

by Barbara Nichols

The Baseline Hillside Ordinance (also referred to as The Hillside Mansionization Ordinance) was originally proposed in the Los Angeles City Council in 2006 by Councilman Tom LaBonge. It took five years and numerous meetings, attended by BCA Board members with City Planning, the Planning Commission and The City Council Land Use Management Committee, for the ordinance to get final approval by the City Council on March 18, 2011. It was signed by the Mayor on March 25, 2011. Barbara Nichols and Don Loze represented the BCA at the City Council vote. Barbara spoke for the BCA in support of the ordinance along with numerous representatives of other hillside organizations. BCA Board members, Nickie Miner, Don Loze, Michael Chasteen and Barbara Nichols attended the Mayor's signing ceremony on April 6, 2011. The new ordinance went into effect on May 9, 2011.

BCA also was instrumental in writing the Retaining Wall Ordinance, passed in 2004, which limited the height of retaining walls to two ten-foot walls separated by three feet, or one 16 foot wall. This ordinance ended the era of constructing 30-50 foot high walls which were destroying our hillsides.

Projects which have been accepted by the Department of Building and Safety for plan check with a completed set of plans, and for which fees have been paid prior to May 9, 2011, will be grandfathered in under the old rules. These projects will have 18 months after the fees are paid, under the old rules, to proceed. Changes cannot be made to plans which increase or decrease the height, floor area or occupant load of the proposed structure by more than 5%, or they will fall under the new ordinance.

Any property zoned for single family homes and designated in a hillside area will be subject to the new regulations. The regulations address floor area ratio (building

size to lot size), height and grading. The ordinance will determine the maximum amount of development for a property based on lot size, zone and steepness of slope. The new regulations also establish new grading limits for areas outside the footprint of a house and will help to reduce the amount of site alteration and protect existing hillsides.

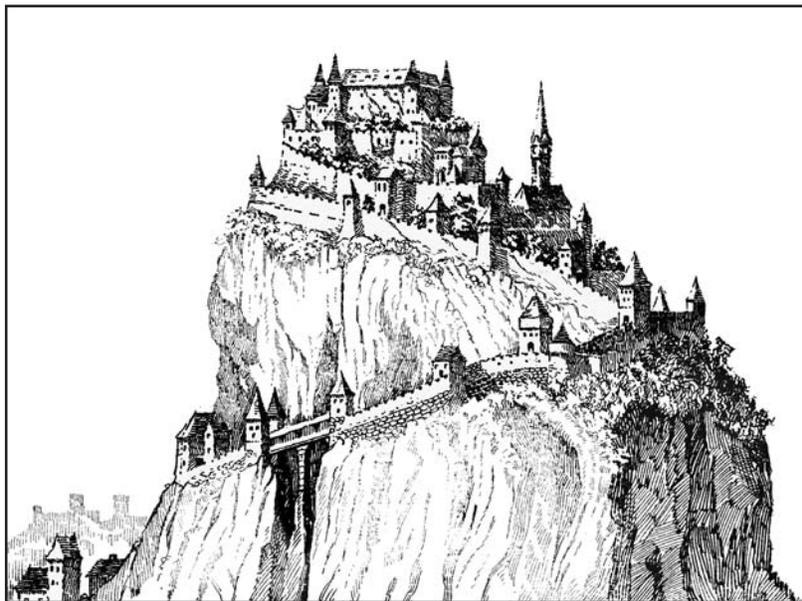
Our City Councilman, Paul Koretz, has been a strong supporter of the Hillside Mansionization Ordinance since he joined the City Council. Councilman Koretz commented at the Mayor's signing ceremony, "The Hillside Mansionization Ordinance will be of immense value in protecting

our hillsides from the ravages of mansionization and over development". BCA extends our thanks to the Mayor, Councilman LaBonge and Councilman Koretz for their continued support of this measure. We also thank Erick Lopez and his staff in City Planning for coming to the hillside communities for our input.

Our work to save the Santa Monica Mountains and our Benedict Canyon community from over development

is not finished yet. This ordinance does not contain a "Ridgeline Ordinance". Try as we did to include this in the current ordinance, it was put off for another day. The County of Los Angeles has had a ridgeline ordinance for county land in the Santa Monica Mountains for a number of years and this ordinance has withstood legal challenges. Your BCA Board members will continue to fight for a ridgeline ordinance that will stop developers and property owners from chopping off a mountain peak to create a flat pad for their home, rather than building with the contour of the land.

We intend to fight long and hard for a ridgeline ordinance comparable to the County ordinance. Our Benedict Canyon ridgelines are a limited resource too precious not to preserve. ■



Vintage Star-Studded Canyon

by Alan Fine



I moved into Benedict Canyon in the late 60's and one memory I have is of my neighbor directly across the street. His house was an old white two-story perched on the hill above me. What intrigued me about him, was that I would see him spending much of his time sitting on a bench on the front porch in his bathrobe watching passing traffic with a cocktail in his hand. It turned out that he was the actor William Lundigan, who starred in many movies in the 40's and 50's. He was also well known as the host of a couple of television series and a spokesman for Chrysler.

The house next door to this one was once, I was told, the home of Sir Cedric Hardwicke, the venerable Shakespearian actor, remembered for his roles in such films as "Keys of the Kingdom" and "The Ten Commandments" and who also appeared on television in "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" and "The Twilight Zone". I remember reading an article in the newspaper about haunted houses in Los Angeles. I was surprised to learn that this house was listed as hosting the spirit of this late gentleman. The house has recently been sold and is being remodeled. The other night, after the workmen left, the hammering and sawing had ceased and the house was dark, I swear I could hear some knocking inside. I guess old Sir Cedric was up to his antics.

A later occupant of this house was a young actor. He did not endear himself to me since he had a habit of playing rock music at full blast with his windows wide open, causing my doors and windows to rattle. If I crossed the street to complain, it was to no avail since he could not hear his own doorbell. I will never forget one night, with music thundering, there was a knock at my door. When I opened

it, I was confronted by a shadowy figure and two huge snarling dogs. It was my "musical" neighbor. "Did you call the police?" he shouted angrily. I replied: "No", however, I did not dare to say that I was glad someone did. I was so shaken that I turned on the TV to take my mind off the incident. I did not know what program I was watching, but it was a scene of two men wheeling a body covered with a sheet into a morgue. The attendants left and slowly the corpse rose stiffly. The sheet fell away, and, yes, it was the same guy who was just at my door. So much for taking my mind off it!

When I bought my house, the realtor told me it was built for a young actress, Toni Seven, who appeared in a number of movies in the 40's. She was rumored to be the girlfriend of US Senator Warren G. Magnuson. Maybe I should put a plaque on my bedroom door, "A Senator slept here". She sold the house in 1947 when she moved to New York.

As BCA treasurer for many years, membership checks from celebrities have often crossed my desk, including those from such stars as Cary Grant, Fred Astaire and Jack Lemmon. For a fleeting moment, I thought of not depositing Cary Grant's check, since his autograph thereon was probably worth more than the check. It was, however, a fleeting thought and I did dutifully deposit it. By the way, the check cleared. ■

BARK, BARK . . .

Cont. from pg. 7

Control will notify the offending party that they have a certain number of days to remedy the situation.

If the barking continues, an initial hearing regarding the licensing of the dog will be held at which the Hearing Examiner determines whether or not the allegations are true. Complainants can use tape recordings, neighbors' testimonies and present a log of times and days when the barking occurred. The Hearing Examiner shall recommend that the dog license be reissued upon reasonable terms, conditions or restrictions for the training, handling or maintenance of the dog to abate the condition. The first offense carries a fine of \$250.

If the dog continues to bark after the first hearing, the

complainant can file a second written complaint to the Department of Animal Control requesting a second hearing, which carries a fine of \$500. If the problem is still continuing, there may be a complaint filed requesting a third hearing carrying a fine of \$1000.

If an owner fails to attend a hearing, the Hearing Examiner may recommend that the dog license be revoked if the evidence establishes that the allegations are true.

Following a hearing, if the dog license is revoked, or in the absence of a license, or valid license, it may be ordered that the dog be surrendered to the Department of Animal Control or removed from the city. The owner has five days to surrender the animal once the time for an appeal has passed.

The complete ordinance, #181930, can be obtained via the city of Los Angeles website at CityofLosAngeles.org. ■

ONE VOICE COUNTS . . .

Cont. from pg. 13

In the summer of 2009, I received a bill from DWP that was ridiculously higher than I was used to. I read and re-read the bill but couldn't figure out what all the letters and numbers meant. So I went to the DWP office on Sepulveda Boulevard in Westwood to try to figure it out. (I'd tried calling, but the phone system at the DWP is, to put it nicely, dreadful.) The very efficient and courteous staff member at the DWP Sepulveda office couldn't explain the bill to me. He acknowledged that it was really hard to understand, but he did figure out that there was a mistake and the DWP owed me \$262.

I received the refund check soon after that, but then I thought, why can't the bill be simple and easy to understand? How do I get this going? Since I didn't know anyone at the DWP, I created my own "model bill" and sent it to Jan Perry, the Chair of the City Council's Energy and Environment Committee. It's easy to find out who is on what committee on the City's website. I was aware that she

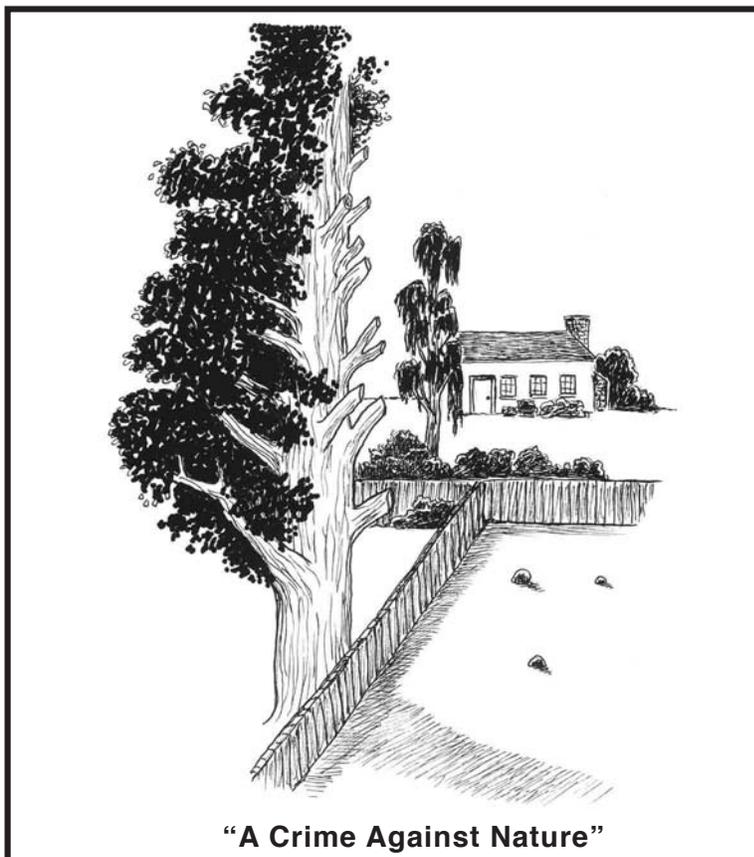
was a City Council Member who was responsive to public concerns and knew how to get things done.

Perry didn't take very long to introduce a motion in City Council asking DWP to design a bill that customers could understand. (Council File No. 09-2329). On September 22, 2009, the City Council passed the motion. DWP hired a consulting firm and held numerous focus group sessions with customers from all over the city. I went to a couple of them and was really impressed by the input, especially from the younger generation. The DWP tried out various designs and figured out how to conform the design to all the information the state government requires to be put on the bills. They met with the Bureau of Sanitation and reported back to the City Council just a little over a year later (October 2010) with the newly designed bill.

You can now see these changes on your new DWP bill. It may not reduce what you'll have to pay, but you'll at least be able to understand the charges. If you still think it doesn't make sense, go to the DWP's Sepulveda Boulevard office and ask them to explain. Who knows? You may even be entitled to a refund. ■

LIFE IN BENEDICT CANYON

by Aron Kincaid



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HELP PROTECT BENEDICT CANYON



BECOME A BCA MEMBER

- DETAILS INSIDE THIS ISSUE -



Now is
Brush Clearing Season

Have you cleared your property?

Save a House – Save a Life –
Save your
Canyon Community