

*Photograph Courtesy of Pasadena Historical Society*

No. 18

August 1985

## WEST PASADENA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

### NEWSLETTER

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#### A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This summertime edition of our newsletter is unusual, but we're trying to keep you up-to-date about West Pasadena concerns. Representatives of WPRA are serving on several city advisory committees, and we're trying to do the best job possible in representing the views of our neighbors. We welcome your ideas and comments about the newsletter and the issues of concern to our neighborhood.

Virginia Kimball - (213) 258-35214

#### MEETINGS

WPRA meetings are held monthly at various homes, usually the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Residents are always welcome. Please call Annette Serrurier, WPRA Secretary, for the date, time, and place (799-2556).

## WPRA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The WPRA July Board meeting was devoted to establishing an agenda for those items we wished to accomplish during the 1985/86 term of office. Rather than reacting defensively to various developments, we would, instead, offensively work toward clearly established agreed upon objectives.

What evolved, however, was that there were ample current issues of significant magnitude to keep us busy. Our longer term view was held in abeyance while we dealt with the issues at hand. As a result, we:

1. Established a sub-committee of the WPRA to review the EIR on a land exchange in which the City would acquire the U.S. Army Reserve Armory site and the Army would move its Reserve unit to the City's Civil Defense site in East Pasadena. If this land exchange were to materialize, the City would convey the Armory site to a private developer for residential development. Comments on the EIR were originally to be submitted by July 15. The WPRA Board requested and was granted an extension until August 31.
2. Established a sub-committee on the potential renovation of the Vista Del Arroyo bungalow properties. While this issue in many ways is related to the Armory property, it is separate and must be treated as such.
3. Established a liason with the Pasadena Garden Club and the Friends of the Arroyo because of our mutual interest in the restoration of La Casita del Arroyo. The WPRA Board has been asked by Mayor Bogaard to appoint a member to the Special Committee under the City Board to deal with this issue and we are in the process of complying.

These are but a few of the issues with which we will be dealing throughout the coming months. The WPRA Board meets almost monthly and any WPRA member is welcome to attend.

Thomas D. Seifert  
President, WPRA

## REPORT FOR WPRA MEMBERS FROM MAYOR BILL BOGAARD

*Vista del Arroyo* - The U.S. Court of Appeals will officially undertake residence in the Vista

del Arroyo Tower on September 27, completing the restoration of the tower building which has occurred in recent years. Approximately 35-40 persons will be working in approximately 60% of the structure, with the balance of the space not yet ready for tenants. It is planned to seek a congressional appropriation for the construction needed to accommodate additional tenants in the future.

Available parking consists of 30 spaces near the Vista tower on the west side of South Grand Avenue and 130 spaces on the surface parking lot on the east side of South Grand Avenue at Del Rosa Street. Thus, parking presently available far exceeds the parking required for the activities at the Vista del Arroyo at this time.

A question remains regarding the future of the Vista bungalows and the City continues to work closely with the General Services Administration, the Court, and the neighbors to explore alternatives and to achieve a proper resolution of this issue.

*Army Reserve Property* - At the same time, consideration of possible relocation of the Army Reserve facility at the base of the Vista del Arroyo hill is proceeding. Some residents have expressed concern about residential development of the Armory property. A maximum of 24 residential units would be constructed if the Armory is relocated, and at this time, the chances of achieving relocation of the Armory do not appear great. I am pleased that WPRA has established a committee to work with the City and the neighbors to study this project as work on it continues.

*Centennial Celebration* - The first official Centennial event in the City takes place on September 17, a benefit for the Centennial Celebration scheduled for the plaza in front of Pasadena City Hall. The theme of the event is "A Walk Through the Decades" that comprise the history of Pasadena and support for the event is already strong. Anyone wishing to attend the event may call the Centennial Executive Director, Patricia Bond, (818) 405-4022.

*Colorado Street Bridge* - A meeting for residents interested in the restoration of the Colorado Street Bridge has been scheduled for September 19 in the Council Chamber at Pasadena City Hall. This will be your opportunity to inquire about the restoration plans, the funding which is being requested from the Federal government, and other questions. I am pleased that both WPRA and Pasadena

Heritage are working with the City staff on this project.

**Financial Planning** - The plan of the City Board to carry out a construction program for the City's public buildings and infrastructure is moving forward, following more than two years examination of the needs of the city and alternatives available for funding more than \$50 million of needed improvements. The approach has been to look to excess city properties no longer needed for public use for 1/3 of the financing; to the business community through an increase in the business license tax; and the residents of the city through an assessment district. As you know, the assessment district, which was neither well presented to the community by City Hall nor well received by the citizens, has been dropped and the City Board and City Manager continue to review the options available for creating the infrastructure needed by the City in its second century.

If you have any questions about City issues at any time, please do not hesitate to call my office at City Hall, (818) 405-4311. You may also call my Field Representative, Nancy Esbenshade, at (818) 405-4444 or (818) 799-7892.

## THE FUTURE OF LA CASITA

La Casita del Arroyo, the Little House of the Arroyo, was severely damaged by an arson fire in May of this year when someone broke in and set three fires in the main hall with flammable liquid. Plans are getting underway now to rebuild this unique, though not well known, Pasadena landmark.

Perched on the edge of the Arroyo close to the big Vista del Arroyo, La Casita was (and is) a nifty little place. Most of us have attended meetings, lectures, teas, or other get-togethers in the little clubhouse. Created primarily by the Pasadena Garden Club in cooperation with the City Park Department, La Casita's construction in 1933 is the result of ingenuity, donated skills, recycled and natural materials, and \$1500 donated by the Garden Club.

Our photograph shows the back stairs, stone walls, and massive chimney built of rocks and sand from the Arroyo. The shingles on the roof came from fallen trees in the upper arroyo. All other lumber was recycled from the bicycle track built for the 1932 Olympic Games. Depression-era labor costs were supplied by



Los Angeles County unemployment funds and Block Aid contributed by the Garden Club. Myron Hunt, the prominent Pasadena architect who designed our main Library and the Huntington Art Gallery and Library, donated his services in preparing the plans and supervising the construction.

Following Myron Hunt's example, and inspired by local architect Conrad Buff, our local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has offered to donate architectural and engineering services for the reconstruction of La Casita. With some insurance money available, and with the promise of donated goods and services, the reconstruction project is getting underway. The goal is to restore it as exactly as possible to its original condition, but there are some new challenges to be met. The arroyo wall needs to be shored up, drainage must be improved to prevent further erosion, and the old stone foundations aren't seismically safe.

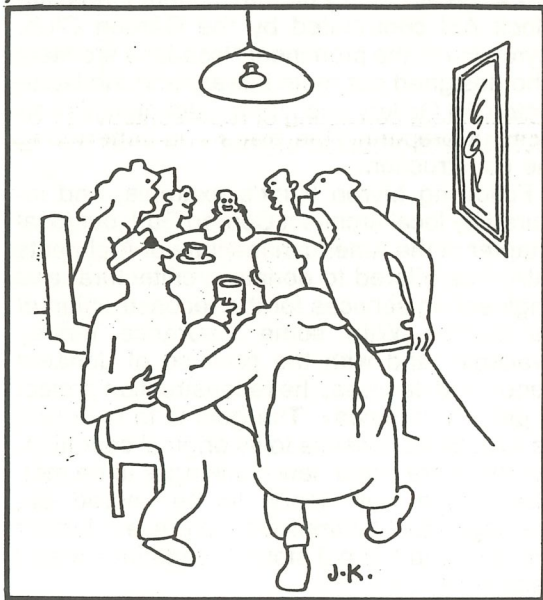
An advisory committee to oversee the rebuilding project will be appointed soon, including representatives of The Garden Club, West Pasadena Residents' Association, Friends of the Arroyo, Pasadena Heritage, Parks and Recreation, Cultural Heritage, and the Design Review Committee. The Pasadena Garden Club is already at work on plans for landscaping around the rebuilt Casita del Arroyo.

## REMINDER: PAY YOUR DUES

It probably just slipped your mind, but a number of you have forgotten to pay your annual membership dues to WPRA, which pay the cost of mailing the newsletter and help to support our other activities. Dues are \$5 for individuals or families, or \$25 for contributing members. Please mail your check to P.O. Box 50252, Orangewood Plaza, Pasadena, CA 91105. Thanks for your continuing support.

## EXPRESSLY ESPRESSO

The first time you visit the Espresso Bar at the end of the L-shaped alley on the east side of Raymond between Colorado and Green Street, you'll feel like you've gone back in time. If the Espresso Bar were a movie, it would be filmed in black and white. It's a period piece, a coffee house from the Sixties complete with espresso coffee machine, dingy paint, and a jukebox.



But take another look . . . Along with the cafe au lait, it's chocolate moussecake, croissants, even Brie that they're serving. And although the Espresso Bar attracts an appropriate number of students, artists, and poets, many of the customers would undoubtedly be labeled Pasadena (or San Marino) Yuppies.

The Espresso Bar is a good place to talk. It seems to be most crowded around ten or

eleven, when the theater and movies are over and people want to go someplace other than a cocktail lounge. It's also a good place to observe people: preppies, mods, yuppies, and some unique personal styles which succeeded hippies and beatniks. Purple hair, tattoos, and spiked bracelets rub shoulders, so to speak, here with knit shirts and Calvins.

The walls are used as an art gallery, with changing exhibits of upcoming and not yet well known local artists. Talent is also encouraged here with infrequent offerings of entertainment, unusual musicians and new bands. But since most people still come to talk, not to listen, the jukebox is the usual source of music—for a nickle a play.

The coffee can be decaffeinated or not, and there are other options like herb teas, Neptune sodas, and fruit juices. They serve endless variations of coffee drinks: espresso, mocha, capuccino, cafe au lait, and cafe royale, and sweet desserts or cheese, bagels, crackers and breads. The Espresso Bar is open seven nights a week until one or two am., and Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons as well. After a play, concert or movie, or whenever a few people want to get together to talk, a coffee house is still a good place to meet.

## BOUNDARIES FOR THE WEST PASADENA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The boundaries of WPRA are:  
West Colorado on the north  
Fair Oaks on the east  
South Pasadena boundary on the south  
City of Los Angeles/Eagle Rock boundary on the west.

## BACK TO SCHOOL

Local public schools will begin the new year on September 9th. This will be the first year of Middle Schools in Pasadena, and sixth through eighth graders in West Pasadena will be attending Eliot Middle School on North Lake Avenue. West Pasadena students who live east of the Arroyo will attend Linda Vista Elementary School and Blair High School, and those on the west side will attend San Rafael Elementary School and John Muir High School.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE LIBRARY

For all of us after-hours book returners, there's good news. Since someone dropped a highway flare into the book chute of our local San Rafael branch, we've had to return our books during regular hours or go to another branch for an after-hours return. Susan Mackall, librarian at San Rafael, reports that she's been promised an outside book bin by the end of September. The new bin will be located next to the mail box on Nithsdale in front of the library.

Readers who can't get to the library during the daytime should remember that the San Rafael branch is open Monday evenings. Mon-

day hours are 1:00-9:00 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday hours are 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. The library is closed Fridays. Adult book talks are scheduled the second Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m. Suggestions for future adult programs are welcomed.

Future activities include a mime program October 7th at 7:00 p.m. This will be an audience-participation program for all ages featuring Ruben Gerard, a noted mime who has performed throughout the United States. On Halloween, October 31st at 4:00 p.m., a costume party for children will feature a contest for the most sincere pumpkin.

## COLORADO BRIDGE MEETING

Our old Colorado Street Bridge is definitely in need of repair, but there are many opinions about the best way to fix it. Consultants for the restoration project, DeLeuw Cather, have completed a thorough inspection and analysis of the bridge's current condition. The federal government will provide much of the funding for the repair job, with Caltrans picking up the rest of the tab.

There is some concern that the government agencies may decide to widen the bridge, change the design of the railing, or somehow

drastically change the landmark. The Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from WPRA and other local groups, intends that the bridge be restored in a way which will not impact its historic and architectural integrity.

A public meeting is scheduled for September 19 at 7:30 in the City Hall Council Chambers. All interested people will be welcome at the meeting for a presentation of alternative plans for the rehabilitation of the bridge.