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FREE VENICE SINCE 1968 BEACHHEAD

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October
2011
#360

Dancing in the Streets



The SAMBA
SCHOOL
dancing and
drumming its
way to the
Spirit of
Venice at
the Abbot
Kinney
Festival,
Sept. 25. See
story on
page 9.

Post Office to Venice: “No Hearing”

By Greta Cobar and Jim Smith

A letter has arrived from an official of the U.S. Postal Service in Washington telling us that the Venice Post Office will be vacating its historic building, and that’s final!

A community meeting will be held at 7pm, Oct. 9 at SPARC, 685 Venice Blvd. to decide our next move. A film, *Brush with Life*, about Edward Biberman, the artist of the mural inside the post office will also be shown. See back page for details.

Opposition to the closing of the historic post office has united Venice across the political spectrum from the Free Venice Beachhead, Venice Neighborhood Council, Venice Peace and Freedom, Venice Stakeholders Association, Venice Town Council and hundreds of individuals.

In his “final decision” letter, David Williams, USPS Vice President, Network Operations, disregarded all of the communities concerns. The letter is posted on the Beachhead’s website - www.freevenice.org.

In his letter, Williams calls the move a relocation of customer services to the carrier annex instead of a closing. Residents affected by a closing are entitled to a hearing, but a mere relocation does not need one.

The concerns of Venetians, as expressed in letters to the USPS, which Williams mentions and then disposes, include: historic considerations, the impact on the surrounding environment, “specifically traffic and parking impacts within a coastal zone and in the residential neighborhood around the Venice Carrier Annex.”

Williams notes that the Venice Main Post Office was constructed in 1939 and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. He doesn’t mention that it currently has no historic protection. He mentions that the “Story of Venice” mural “is currently on display in the lobby,” as if it is part of a temporary exhibit. He neglects to say it has been a permanent part of the post office since 1942.

Part of the USPS strategy has been to separate the removal of retail services from the building from

—continued on page 10

LIBYA:
6,000+ Bombing Casualties

AFGHANISTAN:
1,795 U.S. Dead
115 this month

IRAQ:
4,477 U.S. Dead - 3 this month
33,151 U.S. Wounded
Iraqi Dead: Up to 1.4+ million
Cost of wars: \$1.25+ trillion

Sources: wikipedia.org • antiwar.com
icasualties.org • costofwar.com



Beachhead Collective Staff: Karl Abrams, Greta Cobar, Don Geagan, Mary Getlein, CJ Gronner, Roger Linnett, Jim Smith, Alice Stek.

The FREE VENICE BEACHHEAD is published monthly by the Beachhead Collective as a vehicle for the people of Venice to communicate their ideas and opinions to the community at large. The Beachhead encourages anyone to submit news stories, articles, letters, photos, poetry or graphics of interest to the Venice community.

The staff reserves the right to make all decisions collectively on material published. There is no editor on the Beachhead. The printing is financed by ads, sustainers and donations. The articles, poetry and art work express the opinions of the individual contributors and are not necessarily the views of the Beachhead Collective.

To submit material, include your name and telephone number. Anonymous material will not be printed, but your name will be withheld on request. No payment is made for material used.

Mail: P.O. Box 2, Venice, CA 90294.

Email: Beachhead@freevenice.org

Web: www.freevenice.org

Twitter: twitter.com/VeniceBeachhead

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Park Plan Perils People’s Picnics

Dear Beachhead,
Increasingly, neighborhood forces that are hiding behind new high walls, fences, and fancy remodels --want to call the police now every time they see someone of color, or less than rich, having a picnic or playing dominoes on the benches area in Oakwood Park.

Some of these forces include people who come out and flaunt their disdain and the privilege of their wealthy clique, by running scores of their dogs off-leash in this park daily, knowing that it is illegal.

LAPD officers, now seemingly in cahoots with them, are blatantly ignoring this illegality. This, while they rush to cruise by and intimidate and interrogate any people of color in the park.

This is not something happening in Bull Conner's Selma; this is happening daily in Venice right now at our Oakwood Park. And, let's be straight up and see it for what it is --racism.

On Tuesday November 1 the Oakwood Park Advisory Board is meeting at 6:30 pm in the main building with a “plan” to “add new exercise stations” to the Park and which will, according to them, not “move”, but instead, only “relocate” these picnic benches. Benches that apparently (unlike some in the community) know no distinctions --and welcome all.

Write a letter or email to Jon Kirk Mukri <jonkirk.mukri@lacity.org> Los Angeles Parks and Recreation now --and tell them that you oppose any attempts whatsoever to move, relocate or impinge upon the community picnic area in Oakwood Park. If you would like to help us preserve the community at Oakwood Park's picnic tables --and keep them open to all --please contact us at www.spiritofvenice.net.

Sincerely,
David Busch



Seniors gather under the Sycamore for a friendly game of dominoes. Photo: Lydia Poncé

Big Wheel Confirmation

Dear Beachhead,
Great City Attractions Global Ltd (GCAG) is pleased to confirm that a proposal to operate one of our 53 metre Giant Observation Wheels at Venice Beach is being discussed with the local authorities and that they are consulting some local community groups.

Great City Attractions are delighted with the response that the wheel proposal has received to date from all stakeholders and believe that the wheel would become a valued addition to the Venice Beach tourism and residents.

GCAG are the global market leaders in the installation of these graceful machines and have previously operated in some of the world's leading locations including Belfast, Brisbane, Brussels, Copenhagen, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Paris, Perth, Plymouth, Sheffield, Windsor and York.

GCAG are looking forward to working with the Venice community to explore the potential of this exciting new high quality visitor attraction.

For more information please refer to our local contact:
Michael McDowell
LA INC.
The Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau
Office: 213.236.2328

Regards
Max Carlish
Planning Manager
Great City Attractions Global Ltd
Sutton Coldfield B74 2LZ
United Kingdom

Protests Spirit of Venice Awards

Dear Beachhead,
If I was the Spirit of Venice would I grant an award to a blog site that condones violence and masks the vitriol as free expression? Hell no. I got wind that a protest of Yo! Venice! blog was possible so I decided to check out the ceremony. As an activist and artist I understand the importance of understanding our Constitution. The First Amendment is always a point of discussion on Venice Boardwalk where I work and play almost everyday of the week. For those not familiar the text is as follows:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

As the Spirit of Venice Award ceremony kicked off a handful of protesters appeared carrying signs, “Yo! Venice! is a menace”, and “Hate is not the Spirit of Venice. “ I volunteered to hold the later message because I do not condone violence in any form. While parts of the Yo! Venice! website is informative the sections about the homeless are filled with toxic thoughts and loads of hate-filled commentary made by a small group of posters. All blogs in my opinion should follow internet code of ethics including being honest and fair, minimize harm and be accountable. Ethical bloggers should treat sources and subjects as human beings deserving of respect. Yo! Venice! fails to moderate content except under threat of a lawsuit. Free Expression isn't about violence.

The administrator of Yo! Venice! sent a child to receive the award. The child was announced as the future of Venice. I watched the surreal moment then laughed out loud at the thought of Brett asking me what the protest was about from the crowd. Since 1984, the Abbot Kinney Festival Association has recognized exemplary residents and stakeholders nominated by the community for their contributions to the spirit, creativity and uniqueness of Venice (per the website). Let's hope all of the 2012 award recipients will be contributors to the spirit of creative expression and have a working legal knowledge of the First Amendment along with a compassionate and graceful manner respectful of the diversity that has resided in Venice since it's creation.

Cheers to David King, Garden Master of Venice High School Learning Garden and The Venice Art Crawl (accepted by co-founders Daniel Samakow, Edizen Stowell, and Mark Rojas).

Lisa Green

CORRECTIONS:

In the September 2001 issue, the Scott Wannberg obituary stated that David Smith was a part of the Carma Bums. He was not. The Carma Bums were: Mike Bruner, Doug Knott, S.A. Griffin, Mike M. Mollet and Scott Wannberg.

In the September 2001 issue, the article about the Venice Boys' and Girls' Club's Sewing Club inadvertently switched the names of Ivette Flores and Somone Glenn on their respective pictures. We apologize for the error. They are correctly identified below:



Ivette Flores



Somone Glenn

Update on OFW Ordinance

Enforcement of the proposed new ordinance set to regulate vending on Ocean Front Walk has been delayed because Recreation and Parks Commissioners in Harbor City were unfamiliar with the piece of legislation as well as the issues it tries to resolve.

The effort to put the fate of our boardwalk into the hands of strangers who know nothing about Venice continued on September 21, when the proposed ordinance was voted 2-2 by some clueless, dumb-founded Rec and Parks members. They were given until October 5 to familiarize themselves with the ordinance and Venice in general. At that time new votes will be cast, and if passed the ordinance will next be considered by the L.A. City Council. For a complete text of the proposed legislation and editorial overview, see the August issue of the Beachhead (<http://bit.ly/nFB04o>).

Ever since the Lottery system of allocating vending/free speech space on the boardwalk has been suspended, all hell broke loose. Not only has the entire boardwalk become a free-for-all swap meet, but vendors have been setting up outside of allocated spaces, blocking access to and view of the beach with large canopies and large displays of manufactured goods crap. In addition, most spaces are secured by individuals who sleep out the entire night and bring out their goods or sell the spots the next morning. Coincidentally, the number of people camping out on Ocean Front Walk grew exponentially at the same time that the Lottery was annihilated.

The decisions that affect us are made by people unfamiliar with our plight and unaffected by their own decisions. How much more salt are we willing to take on our wounds before we rise up and take back our city? The good news is that we have already occupied it. ☺

— Greta Cobar

Breast Cancer Event on Abbot Kinney Blvd, Oct. 7

By Janet Gervers

The Harlot Salon is hosting a Breast Cancer Fundraiser on Friday, October 7, 6-10 p.m. with proceeds donated to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. The event will occur during the popular Abbot Kinney 1st Fridays event in Venice and will consist of three fun ways to honor Breast Cancer Awareness Month and the loved ones that are affected by this horrible disease.

In 2011, an estimated 230,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women. Sadly, over 39,000 will perish from this deadly disease.

Chances are we all know someone whose life has been touched by breast cancer. Marylle Koken, stylist and owner of The Harlot, is a survivor herself, but sadly lost her professional mentor to the disease almost two years ago. Several of the other stylists at the salon have similar stories. According to stylist Amanda Jones, "This is the motivation behind hosting a fundraising event and making it the best possible!"

The Fundraiser consist of 3 inspiring activities, titled the Goddess Bazaar:

- *Silent Auction* - There will be dinners from top Abbot Kinney restaurants, framed art work, personal training services, organic facials and hair services from The Harlot Salon and more.
- *"Think Pink" Styling Station* - A station where guests can get a pink feather, a pink hair strand and/or pink nail polish applied for donations as well.
- *Belly Dancing Classes* - Val Macias, the receptionist at the salon is a dancer and will teach mini (15 minutes) Belly Dancing classes to guests for a donation.

All proceeds from the Fundraiser will be donated to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. There is an \$8 (cash only) entry at door.

The Harlot Salon is a new business with a feminine, edgy, provocative environment, where naughty meets nice. The Harlot and is a tucked away location on the north east side of Abbot Kinney Blvd. (close to Venice Blvd.) in a cottage behind the e-Cookie clothing store.

For more information, please see: www.abbotkinney1stfridays.com/p/ak-spotlight.html

☺

No Need to Search for Google, They're Next Door

The time has come for Google to move 450 of their employees into the Venice Binocular building with immediate plans of expansion that are set to almost triple the workforce and almost double the office space. Although some business owners are delighted by the possible business opportunities that could come as a result, concerns of increased traffic and population density in one of the most crowded sections of the city worry the rest of us.

In an attempt to rub off the Venice coolness and seem more hip, Google will inevitably drive up real estate prices and increase congestion. According to Thomas Williams, a senior director of engineering at Google, half of all engineers that will move into Venice are advertisement engineers. Just what Venice has been looking for: big, global corporations and ads!

The Binocular building at 340 Main St. is actually a set of three buildings with a 100,000 total square footage that will immediately be occupied by the 450 employees. However, Google also leased an additional 70,000 square feet at nearby undisclosed locations into which it plans to expand within the next two years. Williams stated that he intends "to keep it under 1200 googlers."

At the September 20 Venice Neighborhood Council meeting, Williams was unable to provide most of the details that concerned Venetians, but made every effort to seem neighborly and accommodating. He stated that one-third of Google employees do not drive to work and tried to de-emphasize the imminent expansion, but went on to say that they intend to be permanent at this location. Everybody, get ready for more gentrification! ☺

—Greta Cobar



Scott Wannberg Memorial

Scott Wannberg was laid to rest at Beyond Baroque, on September 17. The memorial was planned by S.A. Griffin and his wife, Linda. Many poets of Venice and Los Angeles came to to pay their respects. Scott was a much loved poet, hungry for experience of every kind. Scott loved poetry, other poets, music of all kinds and movies. He was a movie maven, who could tell you the first, second and third director on any film.

Scott's main job in his life, besides being a poet, was working at Dutton's Bookstore in Westwood. He was a pillar at Dutton's and could discuss any book with you that came up. Many people said that Scott WAS Dutton's.

Scott was a "bigger than life" man with endless heart, courage and creativity. His poems just "gushed out of him like a river flowing," said Dana Dirlam. She was a close friend of Scott's and one of her fondest memories was driving him and Franceye to poetry readings around L.A. They were always excited to go hear new work from their poet friends.

One of Scott's major influences was the work of John Prine. He also loved The Grateful Dead. With S.A. Griffin, Mike Bruner, Doug Knott and Mike M. Mollet, Scott formed the "Carma Bums" and traveled around the U.S. putting on poetry events wherever they went. Scott never drove a car, but he would take endless buses to get to poetry events.

He was generous with his talent and his friendships. He was always encouraging to new poets.

Scott moved to Florence, Oregon three years ago to be closer to his family. When he got there, he went right to work at creating a poetry community. He kept in touch with L.A. poets through email, Facebook and phone calls.

The memorial service was concluded by S.A. Griffin reciting Scott's poem, "No Regrets" and sprinkling his ashes on the sidewalk and bushes of Beyond Baroque. Whoever wanted to could have a handful of Scott's ashes, to pray over, before tossing them to the sky. The crowd was moved to tears at this and most are still stunned at Scott's passing. Scott was 58 years old when he died. ☺

—Mary Getlein

In Memory of Jane Elliot

By Diane Butler

We lost one of our finest women Venetians this summer, although when you see her husband soulmate, Alex, you glimpse the twinkle of her eyes in the magical twinkle of his eyes. The last years of her life were spent having romantic morning breakfasts at the Fig Tree Café, and handholding walks to the ocean. They flashed their beautiful smiles and Jane gave her famous thumbs up sign to passers-by. They were true examples of living life in the moment.

Jane reached out and encouraged many people to find the best in themselves. I know, I was one of those people whose life changed for the better by knowing her. It was wise to listen to her pearls of wisdom, which she gave freely to people. Jane told Ibrahim that she envisioned a new renaissance of the arts in Venice and encouraged artists to hang in there. She had the true vision for the Spirit of Venice.

One of my fondest memories is of Jane writing a tribute to King Sonny Zorro when he died. She didn't know him intimately, but she was touched by everyone's love for him. She went to great lengths to learn about him from those who were close to him. An accomplished author, she captured his spirit with her words. She joined a small group of women who laughed and cried at a small ceremony by the ocean, where we set his dreadlocks to sea. She knew Sonny's spirit in the end.

Every time I see a silver-headed couple walking hand in hand to the ocean, I'll think of Jane and Alex, for this is the kind of Love we are all looking for. We are so glad that Alex rests in the comfort of their beautiful family. Jane was an accomplished artist and author of several books. Jane will forever be part of the Spirit of Venice. ☺

Survey asks Venetians: How do you feel, What do you think?

A survey conducted by the Beachhead at the Abbot Kinney Festival, Sept. 25, showed declining support for Barack Obama and Bill Rosendahl, but overwhelming support for Venice Cityhood. Abbot's Habit was voted the most popular coffee house and the Free Venice Beachhead, the most popular newspaper (of course).

It was a random, but not a scientific survey, comprised of those festival goers who wandered near enough to the Beachhead booth to snag. Here are the results for those who said they were Venice residents (less than 100):

Their average residency in Venice was 22.7 years. The best thing about Venice is the people, followed by the beach. Others mentioned the diversity, the arts, and the undeniable freakiness of Venice.

They didn't like aspects of gentrification by a wide margin. This was followed by too many tourists, too much development, crime, trash, homelessness, helicopters, the cops, traffic and parking problems.

The most popular coffeehouse, according to the survey, is Abbot's Habit, with 31 percent of those responding. It was followed by the Talking Stick (17%), Groundworks (14%) and scattered votes for Cafe 50s, my kitchen/front porch, French Market, Unurban, Dannys, 242 Pier, Rose Cafe, Collage, and the 7-11.

When asked who they voted for in 2008 for President, 81 percent said Barack Obama, 16 percent said Ralph Nader and 3 percent said Cynthia McKinney. But when asked who they would vote for in 2012, only 47 percent said Obama. Next was "no one" with 16 percent and "don't know" with 13 percent. Scattered votes went to Nader, Dennis Kucinich, a socialist, Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton, Newt Gingrich, Jim Smith, and Lisa Green.

Councilmember Bill Rosendahl may be overstaying his welcome. If the election were held today 65 percent would not vote for him.

Venetians are mostly united on wanting their own city, with 81 percent saying yes, let's do it.

The survey asked participants to rate several institutions on a scale of one to ten, with one being really good and 10 being really bad. The LAPD had the lowest ratings with a score of 7.0. The best ratings went to the Fire Dept. with a score of 4.4. In between and tied were the Neighborhood Council and the City of Los Angeles at 6.1, more bad than good. ☺

Hangin' with the Homeless on a Sunday Afternoon

By Stewart Lopez

It is Sunday afternoon and the sun is going down. The sounds of drum and flute crash through the breeze like waves on the sand and birds in the air. The beach is alive and it feels like home. The sun is saying its goodbyes; everyone is desperate to get in the last few beats on their drums and steps in their dance before the police surround the drum circle with their sirens and loud speakers to disperse the crowd.

"Every drum needs to be off of the sand, violators will be cited," an unwritten rule authorities have made known strikes our ears again. Like cattle, the people leave. The party is over. Soon enough, we begin to see who is on their way home, who still has not had enough of the beat, and last but certainly not least, who is homeless.

Homeless individuals may be hard to distinguish in the boardwalk crowd. After spending time with them, one realizes these individuals that call the beach their home are actually an organized community. They are a society of their own, with a hierarchy consisting of elder council and obedient youth. The spoils of the daily routine are endless for the younger, more resourceful "Street Kids" in the mix. They learn the ropes from the more experienced homeless beach dwellers. What to do and what to say in different situations. They look out for each other and it is a beautiful thing. Amongst the group, they seem to

maintain peace and order through the one thing they lack from the general public: Respect.

They are certainly not a violent crowd, and definitely not stupid. A vast majority of the homeless beach dweller population have been around much longer than you would think.

The 60s and 70s crowd as I like to call them, have been around since the 1960s and 1970s. Death is not a stranger in their community, but we hardly ever hear about it on the news because their part of our population is grotesquely overlooked. They are a declassified faction of society not seen as people, no not here in Venice! On the Venice Beach Boardwalk all choose a side; you are either Homo Sapien or Homeless.

Since when does financial status make you less of an equal to the next? I have met many who call the beach home and it has been like this for quite some time according to the intellectuals of the scene. Some complain about the police who come and kick them to wake them up. If you ask me, they do not complain enough! Authorities harass them with hate fueled "bait".

They seem to provoke the "beach heads" to make a reason and right to arrest them. Hardly any of these noble characters ever bite, they know or they have been told how to handle themselves in most situations. For the most part, these individuals are an educated crowd just looking for some respect and

peace of mind in a world where that, in itself, is a rarity. It is shocking to know how brutal things can get out there.

Despite the ordinance which passed allowing them to sleep there on the boardwalk legally (an ordinance was passed due to there not being enough empty beds in the homeless shelters), the homeless beach dwellers do not seem to be getting the respect they deserve or any respect at all. If the authorities see these people as a lower class of hominid life form, as the incessantly complaining Venetian "high class" obviously see them, then they don't deserve their badges. Even their mothers would feel ashamed.

A popular belief amongst the wealthy "higher" class Venetian's is that overlooking the problem is the best recourse to keep them from getting dirty. Little do they know, this cancerous thought is the one thing keeping Venice from being seen for what it used to be, a happy and generous community of freedom, unsurpassed in its artistic grace and glory.

Cady Clasby, a new AmeriCorps volunteer with the Venice Community Housing Corporation, states "time will separate those who ignore the problem, those sit idle and hope for change, and those who want to make a difference. Let's hope the latter triumphs the former and we can come to a consensus on these issues. Together, I believe we can strengthen our community." ☺



Night Riders: Police on horseback at Ocean Front Walk and Park Avenue. Photo: Pegarty Long

Backs Against The Ocean, Homeless People Persevere on OFW

By Greta Cobar

The poor are getting poorer and are being pushed further and further, until they reach the end of the rope, or the end of the world, also known as Venice Beach.

In the last few months hundreds of people have moved onto Ocean Front Walk (OFW), where they set up camp, almost shoulder to shoulder, night after night. Although this can be seen as a nuisance to the residents, a reason for the increased amount of trash on the Boardwalk or a danger to all because of the violence, drug use, prostitution and fearsome off-leash dogs, it actually is the reality facing our so-called "richest country" in the world.

Meantime the rich are getting richer, paying fewer taxes, getting more government money, widening the income gap and eliminating the middle class, increasing the number of children and adults living under the poverty line. The high unemployment rates

reported are actually almost double by more accurate accounts.

When one reaches the end of the rope, and he or she is not allowed to hang on, what happens? Where do I go? What do I do? I don't see how I'm gonna make it. Most of us have been asking ourselves these questions.

The Venice Stakeholders Association (VSA), responsible for lobbying against the now ex-RV dwellers and for posting overnight parking restriction signs against the rulings of the Coastal Commission, is now putting its efforts into getting rid of everyone who's been pushed to the end of the world and has nowhere else to go.

John Henning, the attorney representing VSA, has sent a letter to City Attorney Carmen Trutanich advising that the city consider OFW, the cemented area between the grass and the residences and businesses facing the ocean, as part of the Venice Beach Recreation Area (VBRA). Categorizing it as such would make sleeping on OFW illegal pursuant to L.A.M.C. section 63.44(D), which makes it illegal to sleep in a city park. According to Henning's letter, the Jones Settlement (2006), which allows people to lie on certain parts of the sidewalk between 9pm and 6am, would not apply to OFW if the area is considered to be part of a city park.

Linda Lucks, President of the Venice

Neighborhood Council (VNC), stated that she will oppose any police action against the people sleeping on OFW until they are offered an alternative. She is currently trying to open the West L.A. homeless shelter on October 15 instead of the scheduled annual date of December 1. For such a change to take place additional funding has to be allocated to run the shelter for the additional 45 days, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) has to approve the change.

Both Councilperson Bill Rosendahl and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa have provided funding to open the shelter earlier than previously planned, and Linda Lucks is scheduled to meet with LAHSA October 4 to seek the commission's approval.

Although all shelters should be open year-round, the West L.A. shelter only has enough space for 150 persons and covers the entire West L.A. area, not just Venice. Meanwhile, there are a whole lot more than 150 people currently sleeping on OFW.

Venetians have historically been tolerant of alternative lifestyles and many old-time OFW residents were attracted to Venice because of the unconventionality of it all. However, the mayhem and never-ending noise that now takes place outside their front doors and windows every night is not much appreciated. But if Carmen Trutanich deems OFW to be part of a city park, nobody will be allowed to even walk in the entire area, which means that residents will not be able to enter or leave their homes and businesses will have to close earlier.

Previous efforts have attempted to displace people, such as cleaning out downtown to make space for the rows of condos occupied by wanna-be-cool yuppies. But as more and more of us are falling through the non-existent nets, we will be forced to get off our comfortable asses and take over Wall Street, OFW and whatever else we have been robbed of. And I can't wait for the day when Libya sends troops to help us chase away the merciless, greedy ruling class and take over the government. ☺

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City May Be Growing Tired of Neighborhood Council Experiment

By Jim Smith

Could this be the beginning of the end of “grass-roots” democracy.

First, the city threatened to cut off the money it doles out to its 95 certified neighborhood councils. During the last two years annual funding has been cut from \$50,000 to \$40,000. Still, the city is shelling out nearly \$4 million annually.

Next, the L.A. City Council neglected to appropriate any funds to hold elections for the neighborhood council boards. It was only a couple of years ago that the city mandated that elections must be overseen by the City Clerk’s office.

One possibility is that the neighborhood councils would be required to pay for their city-administered election to the tune of \$13,000. In Venice, that would be in addition to the \$5,000 that the VNC paid for election outreach last year. At this rate, board members may be out on Ocean Front Walk asking for spare change for their neighborhood council.

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, which under Greg Nelson stuck its nose into the neighborhood councils affairs, and even blocked the Venice council from functioning for a year (see www.freevenice.org/Secrets/andemails.html), has seen its staff cut by 50 percent in the past year.

A recent L.A. Congress of Neighborhoods, which was attended by approximately two-thirds of the councils, unanimously passed a motion against canceling the elections. Without elections, the legitimacy of the various neighborhood councils around the city would likely be called into question. In Venice, the council’s bylaws provide for two-year terms (expiring in April 2012) but also include an open-ended clause: “a board member’s term shall be for the duration of two years or until a successor is elected or appointed” (Article VI, Sect. A). Even with this provision, it’s unlikely that most stakeholders would interpret it to mean a board member could hang on two years after his/her term expired.

An election report by the City Clerk to the City Council in 2010 estimated that the cost of its office running elections for all neighborhood councils would be \$1,343,170. If the election included a vote-by-mail option and outreach for the election, an addition cost of \$1,650,656 would be incurred. Only 21,623 stakeholders voted in 89 neighborhood council elections in 2010.

With city finances unable to meet the usual city expenditures such as libraries, police, fire, street repair, tree trimming, etc., some city officials may question the value of maintaining the “luxury” of neighborhood councils, especially when some of its officers use their positions to oppose their city councilmember’s pet projects. In addition, there is no guarantee that the city’s financial position will have improved by 2014 to the extent that it could pay for 95 elections.

A motion to cancel the 2012 neighborhood council elections will come to the city council this month. When asked recently about the cancelation of the elections, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa commented that it wasn’t a good idea, but he refused to commit to vetoing the motion if passed by the city council.

While, the neighborhood council system was reeling from these cutbacks, L.A. Councilmember Paul Krekorian (CD-2), who is chair of the city’s Education and Neighborhoods Committee, which

oversees neighborhood councils, has introduced four motions to make changes in the way neighborhood councils function. None of his ideas are supported by neighborhood councils on the west side, a VNC board member told the Beachhead.

The motions include changes to funding, training, grievance handling and regional governance.

Funding changes would require a neighborhood council to apply for a grant from the city for a community project (which would mean the end of much of the automatic city funding). A grievance system would be established with a panel of neighborhood council officers from other areas to rule on a grievance. Currently, grievances are filed against the Board, which then rules on its validity.

The amount of mandatory training for Board members would be increased. Regional governance would make neighborhood councils more dependent on each other. In Venice’s case, it would be tied into councils on the westside.

An obvious solution to the costly election process would be to conduct neighborhood council elections at the same time as other city elections, which are held in odd-numbered years. But this would blur the distinction that the city would like to preserve between real elected officials (Mayor, City Council, City Attorney, Controller) and “quasi” officials of the neighborhood councils.

Ten years into the experiment, neighborhood councils have not advanced their role in city government. They are still advisory-only. Nothing can happen in the community by vote of a neighborhood council alone, despite the airs that some NC officials put on.

The whole structure of the neighborhood councils is so L.A. and so un-Venetian. There is a strict separation between the elected board and the peons, also called stakeholders. The city will not allow a town hall structure, where everyone is equal, but insists on a small group that can be anointed as leaders by, at best, a few hundred voters (and sometimes, only a handful) of voters out of tens of thousands in the community.

When the old Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council tried to be truly grassroots, it was slapped down by the city. Beginning in 1973, the Venice Town Council proved that a town hall structure could work well. Everyone had their say, a consensus was usually reached and things got done. They only thing missing was the paternalism of the city over the process.

The September 20 Venice Neighborhood Council meeting was a case in point. As usual, stakeholders where allowed only one minute to state their views no matter the complexity of the issue. Meanwhile, officers rambled on, often repeating points just raised by their colleagues.

In a new twist in avoiding the views of the stakeholders, the first two hours of the agenda were molded into “announcements only.” Under this description, no stakeholder input, questions or sour grapes were allowed. Important topics such as Google moving 450 engineers into Venice, the crime report, the report on the so-called “roadmap to housing,” the pending removal of 38 trees, and reports by representatives of federal, state and city officials all passed by with no comments allowed by stakeholders. It was so boring that even the cops left. Had anyone demanded their

right to be heard, there would have been no police present to throw them out of the meeting.

The Neighborhood Council system was conceived in the late 1990s with the support of Councilmember Joel Wachs and Republican Mayor Richard Riordan. The motivation for setting up the local councils was, in part, to forestall secession movements in the city. Others saw the predominately homeowner-represented councils as a counterweight to the power of city workers unions. Just last month, neighborhood council leaders had no problem at the Congress of Neighborhoods with the fiercely anti-union Wal Mart being the chief corporate sponsor.

A Cal State Fullerton study by Raphael Sonenshein, described a neighborhood council system, in 2007, that was skewed against renters, Latinos, and those with household incomes under \$100,000 a year (See Beachhead, Aug. 2007: <http://bit.ly/qc8EJ4>). Not much has changed in the past four years.

Here in Venice, the Board has either lost or doesn’t want to use the translating equipment used at the old GRVNC meetings. And it has ignored requests by Board member Ivonne Guzman and stakeholders that it provide translations for the growing Latino population in Venice. The Board, which may attempt to cling to power until 2014 without an election mandate, is 86 percent white in a community which prides itself on its diversity.

The hopes that the neighborhood councils would serve as a counterweight to the unions has not saved city officials themselves from being the target of frustrated and irate neighborhood activists. City officials who have never wanted to share their power with anyone, whether pro-union or anti-union, are now confronting new rivals created by the councils. They may be coming to the conclusion that the neighborhood councils are too much trouble and cost too much money.

Surely, Venice and the rest of Los Angeles deserves something better. ☺



Newly appointed board members Matthew Kline and Barbara Lonsdale are congratulated by President Linda Lucks, center. Photos: Jim Smith



Sept. 20 Venice Neighborhood Council two hours into the meeting.



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Post Office to Venice: “No Hearing”

—continued from page 1

the action to sell the property. Williams apparently feels this will allow the USPS to skate past the requirements in the National Historic Preservation Act (Williams thinks our efforts for secession have been successful. He says the City of Venice will be a consulting party!).

He also disregards issues of traffic and parking, saying the retail services will only be relocated 400 feet (anyone have a tape measure?). He says the Annex can accommodate retail counters and Post Office boxes without expansion of the building (employees say it will take major remodeling at the least). He says there will be no rerouting of traffic as a result of the relocation (wrong!). He further states that there is ample parking on the lot for customers (only if employees parking on the street).

In his closing remarks, Williams hits the USPS talking points of declining mail volume and the financial condition of the Postal Service to excuse the damage he is doing to our community.

As a parting shot, he states: “This is the final decision of the Postal Service...and there is no right to further administrative or judicial review of this decision.” We shall see.

Part of a nationwide attack on the post office

The Venice Post office is just one of 3,700 post offices and 300 processing centers set to close by 2015. This is part of US Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe’s plan to prevent the USPS from going into default, possibility that postal workers and their unions have called a “manufactured crisis.”

The prospects of a default were raised when the USPS informed Congress that it can’t pay the \$5.5 billion to a federal retiree health fund due September 30. The Postal Accountability Enhancement Act (PAEA) was passed by Congress in 2006, requiring the USPS to pre-fund 75 years of future retiree health benefits over a ten-year span. Every September 30th, the USPS has had to write a check from its operating funds for \$5.5 billion to the US Treasury to fund the retirement packages of people who haven’t even been born yet. There’s no other federal agency or private enterprise in the US that’s forced to pre-fund benefits like this.

“The Postal Service and its employees don’t want a bailout,” the unions write on a joint website. “What we want is the freedom to use our own surplus pension funds to pay down the pre-funding obligation.” Indeed, The Postal Service’s Office of Inspector General determined that the Postal Service overpaid \$75 billion into its pension fund – money labor and management agree should be allowed to be redirected to pay the healthcare obligation. The Postal Regulatory Commission, an independent agency, commissioned its own independent audit and found the overpayment to be \$50 billion.

Donahoe, on the other hand, went before Congress at the beginning of September and offered the Republicans to nullify part of the union’s contract, eliminating layoff protection, in order to be able to lay off 120,000 workers. He also asked Congress to allow the Post Office to terminate Saturday mail delivery service. Over the last four years the postal service workforce has already been reduced by over 100,000 employees through attrition.

In other words Donahoe is fulfilling Republicans’ demand to lay off 100,000 workers now so that pensions are funded for the next 75 years. And instead of demanding that the \$75 billion overpaid into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) be transferred to the healthcare fund, he just barely mentioned that “we’ve overpaid one of our retirement

funds by \$6.9 billion,” referring to the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS)

Chuck Zlatkin, political director of the New York Metro Area Postal Union, stated that Donahoe “is either a well-meaning incompetent or a duplicitous front man for the people who want to privatize the postal service.” Zlatkin emphasized the importance of the unions in battling the efforts to privatize the post office. According to him, USPS is now paying 600,000 workers a living wage, benefits and retirement packages. If the union is eliminated, workers at will could be brought in for an hourly wage with no benefits. That money would then go not to the American people, but for profit. Zlatkin said that “this is another situation where working class people and poor are being asked to suffer and sacrifice to benefit the rich.” Any layoffs within the USPS would be particularly damaging for the groups that disproportionately get hired at the post office: African Americans and military veterans. Zlatkin stated that his local union chapter is putting out a press release to call for Donahoe’s resignation or termination.

The USPS is currently the strongest union in the country and the second largest employer (second only to Wal-Mart). According to Philip Rubio, North Carolina A & T State University professor, the USPS is “at the hub of a \$1.3 trillion mail industry,” which increases the damage to the overall economy if mail service is limited or compromised. What really is at play here is the contest over what is going to be happening for election in 2012: the higher the unemployment, the worst shape the economy is in, the less chances Obama has for a re-election.

Politicians must act to avoid demise of postal service

Obama himself, probably relying on analysis by high-ranking Postal Service employees such as Donahoe, failed to address the \$75 billion the USPS overpaid CSRS during his September 19 deficit reduction proposal. He only mentioned that the \$6.9 billion overpaid into FERS should be refunded and

went on to say that he supports allowing the USPS to stop delivering mail on Saturdays. Although Zlatkin’s labor union was the second union to endorse Obama, according to Zlatkin “he hasn’t been a good friend to the postal workers or the people they work for.”

Currently two bills have been introduced into the House of Representatives. Stephen Lynch (D-MA) is sponsoring H.R. 1351, the United States Postal Service Pension Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011, which calls for the Office of Personal Management to come up with the actual figure of overpayment and then apply that sum to the prepayment of health expenses. On the other side of the issue is the bill sponsored by Darrell Issa (R-CA), which would require postal workers to pay more towards retirement, would allow the USPS to end Saturday deliveries, sell advertising space at post offices and phase out most residential door-to-door deliveries in four years.

Unless the logical solution of taking money out of one fund and putting it into another fund is implemented, universal postal service will be doomed even though it is one of the oldest, most reliable services in the country. The people most affected, not surprisingly, will be the poor, elderly, disabled and small business owners. Small-town offices are on the chopping block more than those in the big cities, and small-town jobs will be eliminated with them. Residents have expressed concerns of losing their town’s identity once the local post office is gone.

Gray Brechin, project scholar at the Living New Deal Project at UC Berkley’s Department of Geography, who has written extensively about the history of the post office, says that it is a manufactured crisis. “This is about dismantling the Postal Service, getting rid of unions, privatization, and selling post office buildings to developers.”

Here in Venice we now have to consider legal action, more pressure on political leaders and direct action or a 70-year-old landmark and center of our community will be in danger of vanishing.

Join your neighbors at a community meeting to consider our alternatives. See back page. ☺



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Are we doomed to have a second-rate bicycle network?

By Jim Smith

The Neighborhood Council’s grudging approval, in concept, of the proposed Main Street bike lanes, Sept. 20, came only after city officials said it was their way or the (car) highway. It would take months, even years, to implement any changes, said Los Angeles Dept. of Transportation (DOT) officials.

One of the problems with the plan that concerned the Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) Board was the dangerous side-by-side lanes for cars, buses, trucks and bikes. If people on bikes try to keep their distance from the big vehicles, they run the risk of being “doored,” that is, hit by a driver’s door from a parked car when it suddenly opens.

Alex Thompson, president of Bikeside (who introduced himself as the other Alex Thompson), Board member Amanda Seward and I, spoke in favor of bikes and other vehicles being separated by parked cars. In other words, put the bikes by the curb, then parked cars and finally other vehicles in the center of the road. This arrangement is called buffered bike lanes and is used throughout Europe. It’s also being used more and more in the U.S., including New York City, Portland and Long Beach, among other cities. DOT officials protested that buffered bike lanes were not in their “toolkit.”

Apparently, DOT engineers and managers went to school when bikes were not an important consideration. They are auto-centric. They seem to consider bikes just another type of car, perhaps a two-wheeled car. It is similar to when personal computers were first introduced. Many people considered them just

another form of typewriter, and called them Word Processors.

In fact, bikes are on the verge of radically changing the way we live. As bikes become more common than cars, commutes will become shorter, neighborhood stores will reappear, communities will become more sociable.

No one died for mistaking a computer for a typewriter, but bike riders are often seriously injured or killed because of unsafe road conditions. How many more car-bike crashes will it take before DOT stops whining about plan changes and starts implementing safe bike routes by means of buffered bike lanes, bike-only streets, car-only streets, education for auto drivers, more signage and sharrows, wider bike lanes, bike signals at intersections, reduced speed limit streets and other safety features.

Given their past performance, the entire DOT may have to be sent to reeducation camps to learn that bikes are not cars. Remember, these are the people who gave us a crosswalk on Abbot Kinney and Palms where pedestrians cannot tell if the light for cars has changed to green or if it is still red.

They are the people who, in a fit of sadistic humor, threw bikes, cars and buses together in one small lane (may the biggest SUV win!) on Abbot Kinney Blvd.

Now we have a Main Street bike lane where more than 700 bike riders will daily risk their lives. Santa Monica is currently studying changing its Main Street bike lanes to make them safer, a fact not mentioned by DOT at the VNC meeting.

The Main Street bike lane almost connects with the Venice Blvd. bike lane (another hazardous route). Almost, but not quite. If the geniuses at DOT had striped three blocks of Venice Way, from the Circle to the Library, it would have connected. Don’t they have maps downtown?

DOT was so desperate to get its plan approved by the VNC that it resorted to lobbying its Board. It urged people from all over Los Angeles to email or attend and speak in favor of DOT’s plan. One example: “Main Street bike lanes need your support! Please contact the Venice Neighborhood Council, and Council Member Bill Rosendahl’s office and let them know how much you want these lanes.” (<http://ladotbikeblog.wordpress.com/2011/08/24/main-street-bike-lanes-need-your-support>).

How odd is it that the mighty DOT would lobby a little neighborhood council? In fact, neighborhood councils are set up to reflect the feelings of their stakeholders, not the position of a city department. No one contacted by the Beachhead wanted to talk about this blatant breach of the rules. Not Bong-Hwan Kim, General Manager of the Dept. of Neighborhood Empowerment, not Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, and not several VNC Board members called by the Beachhead. One VNC Board member said off the record that it is not right, but it is done all the time.

It seems that we in Venice will be unable to have a say on things as simple as bike lanes until we have cityhood or until L.A. is truly occupied by its residents. 🚲



Bioweapons Are US

By Janet C. Phelan

The Center for Disease Control has declined to confirm or deny allegations that the United States government is stockpiling biological and/or chemical weapons at Sierra Army Depot, a military base in Northern California.

According to a biomedical engineer who worked at the medical clinic at Sierra Army depot in the seventies, the base at one time contained a stockpile of nuclear weapons that have been replaced by large vats of liquid. In an interview the CDC declined to confirm or deny the existence of biological safety labs level 4, called BSL-4.s that handle the most dangerous germs known to man, some of which have no known treatment or cure and pose a grave threat to human life.

Following 911, and particularly following the anthrax letters which came fast on the heels of the Twin Towers attacks, these “biological safety” labs started to proliferate as silently and quickly as mushrooms. At this point in time, Congress is allocating over one billion dollars a year to fund biological defense research. But is it really defensive research going on in these labs?

According to the Sunshine Project, an international non-profit working against the hostile use of biotechnology, the institutional safeguards put into place to ensure that these labs are doing the appropriate kinds of research are almost nonfunctional and the mandated research was not taking place. Non-authorized research is occurring instead.

The Pentagon did not respond to queries concerning BSL-4’s on two military bases. The possible presence of these weapons at Sierra Army Depot augurs the likelihood that these weapons are being

stockpiled on other bases, as well.

The apparent “secret” presence of BSL-4s on military bases, coupled with indications of biological and/or chemical stockpiles at Sierra and elsewhere, point to the likelihood that the U.S. is engaged in developing biological warfare agents. This is a violation of the international Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The U.S. signed the convention in 1972 and is a repository of this international arms treaty, along with Russia and Great Britain. Unlike many other arms treaties, which come with a host of inspection regulations and repercussions for violators, the BWC has no teeth. There is no investigatory capability and no oversight body to assign penalties. In this sense, the BWC is merely window dressing.

It has recently come to light that the United States violated this treaty, at least on paper, through the passage of the Expansion of the Biological Weapons Statute, which is published as Section 817 of the U.S. Patriot Act. This statute largely reflects the language of the BWC, which restricts the development, production, and stockpiling of biological weapons. However, there is a caveat at the end of 817 which releases the United States government from culpability for violating the restrictions: “(c) Whoever knowingly violates this section shall be fined as provided in this title, imprisoned not more than 10 years, or both, but the prohibition contained in this section shall not apply with respect to any duly authorized United States governmental activity.” It is through this caveat that the U.S. violated both the letter and spirit of the BWC. What the U.S. has accomplished, through the passage of the Expansion of the Biological Weapons Statute, is to give itself a “blank check” for the deployment of these weapons.

The anthrax attacks themselves belie the declarations that the U.S. is not engaging in this research. It has been generally acknowledged that the anthrax contained in the several letters was cooked up in a government lab. The FBI’s contention that they “had their man” in Dr. Bruce Ivins seemed to be both confirmed and put into suspension by Ivins’ alleged suicide. The mainstream media played down the fact that Ivins, who allegedly overdosed on Tylenol, began to gain strength in the hospital. While waiting for a kidney transplant, he was subsequently removed from life support.

Recently, the National Academy of Sciences released their long awaited report concerning the FBI investigation, which nailed Ivins as the anthrax mailer. The National Academy did not endorse the methodology used by the FBI to determine that Ivins was culpable and was unable to support and endorse the Department of Justice’s conclusions concerning Ivins’ guilt.

The affixing of responsibility to Dr. Ivins, who was a researcher at Ft. Detrick, does have its political perks. The identification of a suspect (conveniently, now dead) removes suspicion from anyone else lurking in these labs. It certainly derails any concerns of a larger, government conspiracy concerning the anthrax letters, which were received by liberal Congressmen and members of the media right before the vote on the U.S Patriot Act. Viewed through this lens, nagging doubts may surface, in which a biological warfare agenda emerges into the foreground as a dark and ominous possibility. And are these toxins being stockpiled on military bases and if so, why? 🚲

William Attaway

Featured Artist

By CJ Gronner

The Other Venice Film Festival is honoring William Attaway as its Featured Artist during all the screenings at Beyond Baroque (October 13-16th) so I thought it was about time I and We got to know a little bit more about the man behind a lot of the art that we see in Venice every day.

Known around town as simply “Attaway”, he is probably best known in these parts for his beautiful mosaic column looking out over The Breakwater (by the beach park for kids next to the Police Station), creating a circle of calm amid the Boardwalk madness.

Born in New York to artist parents (and Grandparents - his Grandfather designed the interiors of Radio City Music Hall), Attaway took after them, and was always an artist himself. They were a black and white family and in the early 60's with all the assassinations, it could be a scary time for bi-racial families, so Attaway's family moved to Barbados, where they lived “the simple life” until he was 13. Attaway always loved to draw, and spent many of his days watching men make pottery in kilns built right into the side of Barbados' Chalky Mountain. This was mainly to escape the wrath of a hard core Grandma, but his love of clay was discovered during those long afternoons of observation.

The family re-located to L.A. for his Dad's work, and soon young Attaway was working as a 16 year-old assistant to Brian Scheller at a ceramic studio called The Pot Farm (now called the Clayhouse) in Santa Monica. After blowing up the kiln on his first day - literally - Attaway worked extra hard to learn all he could about ceramics. His pots grew bigger and bigger, as “there is no limit to clay”.

Attaway came down to Venice a lot to skateboard, and soon decided to drop out of high school (in 10th grade) to go in on an art studio with his friend. His Dad said he could if he really meant it and created a body of work. “So I did.” He sold out every community art show he entered, and walked around with a bunch of cash in his pocket as an 18 year old artist. A good time in 80's Venice.

The art continued to expand as Attaway began to think of his sculptures more architecturally, influenced by Gaudi, and he felt the urge to create something that hadn't been done before. When plans for a Venice Arts Mecca school at the beach (where he




was going to teach ceramics) fell through, Attaway applied to be the artist to create a work at the site of the former Venice Pavilion. The architect for the area had been looking at Attaway's columns done for the Pomona Metro Station when the news came in that Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia had died. The guy had been close to Garcia and was very upset, and took it as a sign that he should give his blessing to Attaway doing the art. Over 500 applicants, down to 8 finalists, and Attaway walked in to give his presentation right after Robert Graham had given his. But Attaway didn't even have to finish his whole spiel, as they agreed with him right off that, “I knew what should happen here. I grew up here.”

From 1995-2000, with an entire year on physical labor alone, the 25 foot beach column was brought to life. Through the hard work of two people - Attaway and his best friend, Kenny Roberts - 5 tons of clay, 25,000 gallons of cement, and lots of short ribs between them and the Filipino security

—continued on page 13

Photos of William Attaway and his art by CJ Gronner





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Haaaaaaaappiness is a warm gun, Oh Yeah! Photo: Pegarty Long

THE 27TH ANNUAL ABBOT KINNEY FESTIVAL

By CJ Gronner

This year's Abbot Kinney Festival started out extra gloomy and misty, one of those lazy Sundays where it's hard to get out of bed. That is, until the bikes started noisily swooping by outside, bright and early, on Venice Boulevard for the La Triathlon, that some planners somewhere thought would be a good idea to hold the same day as the Abbot Kinney Festival. Anyway, it got us up.

After some stiff coffee to get us ready and jazzed for the day's festivities, it was off to Abbot Kinney. No one in Venice lets a little grey dampen the spirits for our Festival, so the place was already packed by 11 a.m. The booths (amazing jewelry, as ever. Lots of feather stuff too. And always the wings for kids - and some adults) seemed to be doing a brisk business - and they mostly seemed to be actually hand-made, artisan type stuff this year, a vast improvement over some of the junk stands of years past - as I made my way past them all to take my shift at The Free Venice Beachhead booth.

It's always nice to hang out in one spot for a bit at the Festival, to really watch the people and take it all in. It's nice to hear from readers of our only truly

local paper, about their concerns, ideas, stories, and drinking in the afternoon commentaries. A few neighbors even offered cocktail delivery services right to the booth ... but then forgot to return with them, sigh. We handed out copies of the latest issue and had fresh t-shirts for sale, with my long asked for design of "DEFEND VENICE" graphic with a guy in a tree with his fist raised. Love it. You should get one. Oh, and you can by contacting the paper at www.freevenice.org. There were also some surveys to fill out that proved to be interesting, with telling results (about topics ranging from where you get your coffee to who you're gonna vote for next year) also in the paper or online.

I served my booth time and then it was off to explore with my gang. I've said it before, but the Abbot Kinney Festival is like Thanksgiving for the whole town of Venice - you see people you may not have seen all year, and it's a big reunion in the street. Plus tens of thousands Thanksgiving orphan tourists that come to hope to see something outrageous, and

eat food. And drink beer in the sunshine, that I am happy to report broke through brightly right about midday.

One strange and mystifying thing about this year's Festival was that not ONE of my close friends was playing music at ANY of the stages. THAT is outrageous. It was slim last year, but as far as I could tell this year, there did not seem to be any local VENICE musical acts playing for their friends and neighbors. None. Whomever is in charge of music booking needs to really take that into account in the future because it was the overwhelming and resounding

—continued on page 13



Former Beachhead Collective member Amy Dewhurst finds the September issue incredibly interesting. Photo: Jim Smith



The Devil. Is that a Spirit of Venice Award around his neck? Photo: CJ Gronner

Photo: CJ Gronner



↑ Good time at the Festival. ↓ Bad time at the festival.



Photo: Jim Smith

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Swami X in the 1970s

By Mark Hawes

Walking down the ocean sidewalk past the open café, past the craftspeople wondering whether they will be allowed to be there next weekend, past the musicians jamming with a hat for change in front of them, past the actors doing their improvisations, past the striking tenants of the old apartment building, one comes upon a lone figure standing on a bench in front of the Ocean Market. A crowd of people gather around him on the small grassy knoll between the sidewalk and the bike path. They listen to him and laugh or chuckle or leave. He is no other than the ubiquitous Swami X, not to be confused with your run-of-the-mill swami.

Swami X, or just plain Swam to his close friends, has a long grey beard that hangs below a pair of dark glasses with arab headgear to keep the hot Venice midday sun from frying his brain anymore than it has already been fried. He is a cross between a sidewalk poet, a mad prophet and a stand-up comedian. He despises any sort of organized religion or any kind of organized anything. He is from the Lenny Bruce school of raunch so any of you with an esthetic sense of the higher ideals of love and sex, stick with the craftspeople and the Sidewalk Café.

“The only difference between Democrats and Republicans is that Democrats are fucking but not coming and Republicans are coming but not fucking,” is a favorite of Swam’s. He stands on the bench giving his views of politics (“They are afraid of me taking over the government. I could go to Washington and take over the government in a week, but who wants it.”), religion (“The problem with the Harry Krishners is that they are not allowed to fuck. If you’re not fucking then you’re killing. Fucking is a mystical experience.”), race (“Whites have a defective gene in them that when they try to say the word muthafucker, it sounds funny”), and sex (“Eating pussy is so good that even women are finding out about it.”)

At some point in the afternoon a crazed street person saturated with his fill of wine and reds and sun gets up to harangue Swami X.

“Hey, Swami, you suck.”

This is where one of the many talents of Swam is used to its highest degree: the put down. The drug crazed goon belligerently charges the bench.

“It’s the CIA,” says Swam, “I knew they were after me.”

“Hey, Swami, you suck.”

“I did not hire this guy to do this. Actually he is my business manager. We have good rapport.”

“Fuck you.”

“This is what we call group therapy. Everybody gets out their hostilities.”

“Fuck you.”

“Hey man you have a big vocabulary. Why don’t you wander on down the sidewalk and find your own bench. There are a whole lot of them.”

The Swam keeps on talking but the guy keeps on butting in, foaming at the mouth. At times it looks like the guy is going to physically charge the bench but Swami fends him off with verbal swords. Then a woman gets up and starts yelling at him. He is being attacked by all sides but he fends them both off to the approval of the audience. The crazies finally exhaust themselves.

It is time for Swami to read his poetry. His poetry is interesting but crude, designed to shock and stimulate. It sure isn’t T.S. Elliot. He also reads horoscopes that are interesting and answers questions as to the nature of the universe. The afternoon wears on and the audience keeps changing. Some people laugh, some are disgusted. That’s show business.

“I was asked to be on the Johnny Carson Show,” says the Swam jokingly, “but I would have to shake Ed McMahon’s hand. So I told them to forget it.”

Swami’s got his own show every weekend on that bench in front of curious crowds of wandering tourists, bike riders, rollerskaters and people of all walks of life. Who could ask for more. ☸



Hip Replacement

Swami X has left the Beachhead
Has he left the public dais
from the park bench heights
where he was discoursed,
admonished and exhorted
to his fool's court crowd,
the Venizens of the Beach?
Swami X needs a hip replacement?

Lord Buckley, Lenny Bruce,
Mort Sahl, Bill Cosby,
Richard Pryor (The Town Crier)
Milton Berle (thief of bad gags)
Jonathan Winters (Maude Fricket),
Henny Youngman, Jackie Mason,
Borscht Belt Barkers
George Carlin and The Florida Marlins
All need a hip replacement!

On walkers, on soap box,
on sidewalks, on streets,
help Swami X get back on
his feet!

We Venizens of the Beach
don't want a hip replacement
You Dig?

-Tim Weil

9/11 Remembered at Talking Stick

By Mary Getlein

On September 11, Lisa Green hosted a “Healing From The Heart” gathering at The Talking Stick. It was a woman's art show, music and poetry event as an alternative to the national grieving of the 10 year anniversary of 9/11. It was an effective way to deal with grief: music, art, poetry and the making of friends in the process.

The artists represented were: Diane Butler, Lynette Castle, Hillary Kaye, Lisa Green, Eva Babbour, Desiri Hawkins, Rhiannon Maihi, Sarah and Mary Getlein. A pleasant surprise was that most of the artists could also sing, and proceeded to do so.

Lisa Green started out talking about all the roles of a woman: a witch, a healer, a temple prostitute, a mother, a daughter, a friend. How women need to get together and relate to each other and encourage and nourish each other. That grief is a mysterious process and we all deal with it in different ways.

Suzy Williams kicked it off with two blues songs and talked about her extraordinary life of being a woman. Mary Getlein followed with a reading of her poem from the Beachhead and a blues song, “It’s a Blessing” by Mississippi Fred McDowell. Hillary Kaye read poems from her book, “Hour Of The Moon”.

Lisa Green acted as M.C. and sang. Toya Song got up and belted out some blues songs. She is an amazing singer. Desiri had a collage up and introduced herself as a community activist. She blew us all away with singing “White Rabbit” by Jefferson Airplane.

Eden had an oil painting and got up and started talking about the prison-industrial complex that exists today in the state of California. Then she did a spontaneous free-style poem about Venice, contrasting the Venice of the old with the Venice of today.

After the women were done singing, Wes, Joey, and Chris, musicians from the Venice Beach Orchestra, got up and played some jammin’ sets and everybody danced and had a good time.

The next band was the “house band” of the Talking Stick, which consisted of Nicki Black, Roger Houston cyvband Dan the Piano Player. Everyone danced and they asked if anyone wanted to sing with them. So we all got back on stage and jammed with the band. Hillary Kaye was invited up by Nicki Black, and she got up and did “Ain’t No Sunshine When She’s Gone” and “Summertime” and really wailed.

Nicki kept the store open longer so we could stay and hang out and play music. Roger Houston performed his poems, which were amazing. David Bush read a letter by Juditte Erki about homelessness (from the Beachhead) to the crowd.

The night was declared a success by all involved. The Talking Stick is a great venue for having events. They have open mic on Wednesday nights which are always an eclectic mix of performers. ☸



World Trade Center
aftermath, Sept. 2001
Photo by Jim Smith

Discovering the Presence of Beauty
(for the Temple of Man)

Tony Scibella greeted me the other night
on the dawn threshold of a dream,
Said: How’s that poetry thing working out
For you? I was high
over Taos and told him everything
was fine, fine, that I’ve known Her for over
30 years and I still get all tongue tied
in Her presence, my
heart races
my feet swell, I’m
docile and feverish, both, my
mind becomes a circular firing squad
of Catholic boyhood images.
At times, cold sober, I
feel like the most stoned Western
ever filmed—
I asked him what he was doing, he
said just smoking, dreaming, walking
the beach, I go to Hollywood Park
and win everyday.

I asked him: Tony, are you and Stuart myths?
He said, I don’t know about him,
But I am and I know why I am where
I’m at, at
Any given moment.

I told him I thought
Stuart Perkoff had an assortment of mini-
gods running through his veins, that
his human love stories could never compete
with his romance with the Muse,
Our Lady of Venice, spirit-sister of
born tricksters/
Lover to human poets.

I said I’m always getting turned
on: by
a meteor shower high over the Pecos River,
the elongated summer of September, with
its dry soaring highs and star power nights
where the Milky Way looks like
electrically-charged
grace on black velvet,
by the Kid in America sipping
brandy coffee outside the Suicide Room,
by hearing Alphabet mouths
speak Love is the Silence in
dreams of
autumn waves on pale
dawn beaches.
By Frankie’s center ring--

WORDS!
Scibella said it best:

For it is a mad quest
This poet gig
Ridiculous if you choose it
Doomed if you don’t

It chose me, Tony, and you
helped lead me through the mindfield of self-
deception and broken blossoms
of prayer and promise until we
uncovered beauty
on this landscape of sighs—
and she sang like Aretha Franklin.
Emoted like Brando.
Was as silent as John Cage.
Cursed like an Irish Priest.
Exploded into the existential border
mayhem of
bad whisky Peckinpah,
her guns of September cradled
in the revolutionary doomed passions
of Zapata;
she did the bars in the badlands
with Venus,
she flowed out of Miles’ horn like
a death row butterfly,
and in the end, beauty,
was as elusive and mythic as
Zapata’s white horse.
That’s why we craved her. That’s
How she revealed herself
To us.
Salud!
Jimmy, Frankie, Tony, Stuart, John, Philomene,
S.A., David, Larry, Ed and everyone who taught
me that beauty is
always more than dream deep.

–John Macker

IOU, All

I am One, Lucky Lady
And, I owe it ALL to YOU!
You gave me INSPIRATION
When – I didn’t know what to do.

So – From One Lucky Lady
Please accept my I O U
You picked me up when I was down
Dear,
Just – By being YOU!

You are my INSPIRATION
You are my FANTASY
You are my KNIGHT-in-SHINING ARMOR
You’re my SYMPHONY

So – From One Lucky Lady
Please accept my I O U
And, if your “Lady Luck” runs out
Dear,
Here, I am, for YOU!

Love,
–Tina Catalina Corcoran

Things I Wished I Had Said At The
Talking Stick

By Mary Getlein

For all the women that came before us
and became artists -
which was not allowed -
Nothing was allowed -
Actresses, prostitutes, mail-order brides, singers -
all the women who dressed like men -
and became PIRATES, SOLDIERS, SAILORS -
all the women who became myths -
who had snakes in their hair
who were goddesses of death, of birth,
(snakes snakes snakes - snakes contain wisdom)
all the women who could talk to animals
and understand ...
all the women who wrote poetry
that no one ever saw
(like Emily Dickenson! 1775 poems!)
until they died
all the artists who never sold a single painting
until they were discovered
years and years after they died
all that creativity -
LOCKED UP in a mental hospital
LOCKED UP behind the meds
Oh-my-god-she thinks she's
an artist?, an actress?, a poet?, a painter?
Who
does she think she is?
Well, she's herself, you idiot!
And who the hell are you -
get a grip on your Oprah-watching self!
Everyone gets a chance to re-tell her story
you can go back and start over and say:
Oh, yeah, poverty? Is that all?
I've been poor my whole life - is that all?
Fuck, as long as I can get my hands on
some paint, what the hell do I care?
I've invited myself to my own table.
I'm going to sit at the “Welcome Table”
and I'm going to drink with all my ancestors!

making love

i sat on a bench
faced the sun setting
shielded my eyes

3 couples sat nearby
2 surfers walked
from the water's edge

never looked back
1 surfer emerged
stood his board up

next to him
watched the sun go down
8:05 p.m.

you could feel the heat go
before the sun
was entirely gone

i walked past the showers
the bongo player was gone

–Harry E. Northup

Spirit of Venice

By Jim Smith

The Spirit of Venice is NOT
an army of occupation
brutalizing the poor
and homeless.

The Spirit of Venice is NOT
hate spewing out
of the internet
like waste water.

The Spirit of Venice is NOT
the slick, the sly,
and the corrupt
just thinking of making a buck.

The Spirit of Venice cannot be bought,
cannot be awarded,
cannot be owned.
The Spirit of Venice is NOT for sale.

The Spirit of Venice is breaking
the chains and flying free
like the gulls, the crows,
and yes, the little pigeons, too.

The Spirit of Venice is a Black man
and a white man, Irving and Abbot,
walking through a swamp
and dreaming it into a city.

The Spirit of Venice is all of us
becoming smarter, kinder,
and more loving,
day by day.

The Spirit of Venice is learning
the language of the sea
and the slow rhythm
of our world of sand and surf.

The Spirit of Venice is alive in
our musicians, our poets,
our artists and rebels,
and all who live by l’esprit.

The Fall of Troy
for Troy Davis

By Mark Lipman

They followed a man who would later sacrifice his
entire crew, so that he alone could return home
safely. Still, they volunteered willingly, blinded by
their own bloodlust for victory. In, they crammed
their battle worn bodies, full of musk and blade, into
those hollow crevices, those muscular niches of fallen
timber that would fool every eye, but Cassandra’s.

Heaving, their unexpected victims pulled on the ropes
of their doom, joyously dragging that dead horse
through the gates, to the very doorstep of their homes,
where their wives and children slept. This would be
the last time their brows would feel the tender kiss
goodnight.

A sacrifice must be made of innocent blood to temper
a king’s rage. For all kings and politicians assert the
right of divinity as their own, the power over life and
death. With fixed concentration, the executioner
glides his sharpening stone over the cutting edge,
readying the assault of their governing authority.

At the stroke of midnight, while all are fast asleep,
they pull the levers, unhitching the trap doors of in-
sanity, making a nightmare of our dreams, hacking
away at the black flesh of night, silencing our
screams with the noble fist of their self-righteousness.

Sound the alarm! Alas too late. Troy is burning.
Bound in chains, crushed and defeated, hung in the
public square, the echo of injustice is deafening.



Vera Davis Center Offers Services, Needs Help

By Greta Cobar

The Venice community won the legal battle to allow social services to continue being provided out of the Vera Davis. However, operating budgets have been slashed significantly by the city of LA, and the organizations operating are reaching out to those who are able to donate money in order to ensure that in these tough times the needy still have a refuge.

The Mildred Cursh Foundation provides food distribution every first and third Thursday of the month starting at 12:30pm. In addition, Reach for the Top brings in and hands out fresh, organic vegetables, tofu, yogurt and other healthy items every Friday from 1pm to 5pm. Bread and Danishes are also available every Tuesday and Thursday morning. An estimated five to six hundred people show up to take advantage of the free meals every month, and more are always invited to participate.

Another great program that has been running out of the Vera Davis center is Tech Training, with classes re-starting October 4. Lois Webb coaches students through instruction in Web Design, E-Commerce, Microsoft Office, CISCO and Digital Music Production to name just a few. The classes are available every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1pm to 3pm for adults and from 3pm to 5pm for youth under 18. The computer-based training allows the participants to go over and over each section until they are comfortable moving on to the next section without the intimidating pass/fail grading system. Twelve computers are available, and all classes are free of charge.

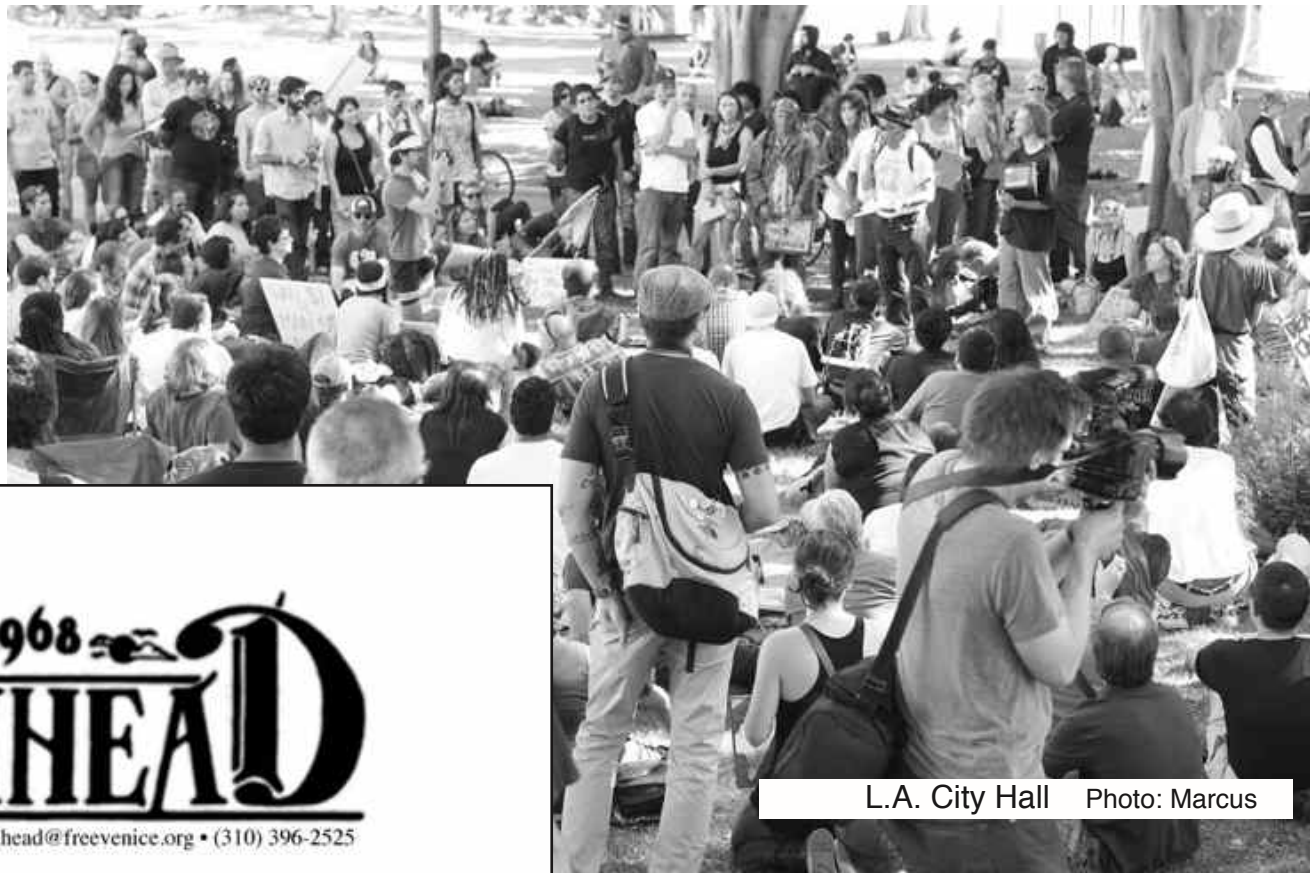
The Latino Resource Organization provides free legal consultations concerning taxes, immigration or passport questions every weekday from 8:30am to 1pm. Department of Public Social Services representatives are available every fourth Thursday to help people sign up for food stamps. Senior bingo takes place every Friday night, and Alcoholics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings take place Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The dedicated volunteers who run these programs, especially the food distribution efforts, are in dire need of some help from those who are fortunate enough to be able to spare. Let's make an effort to sustain these vital programs in these dire times. 🚲



Brooklyn Bridge Photo: Mat McDermott

Occupy Wall Street Spreading to Los Angeles. Can Venice Be Far Behind?



L.A. City Hall Photo: Marcus



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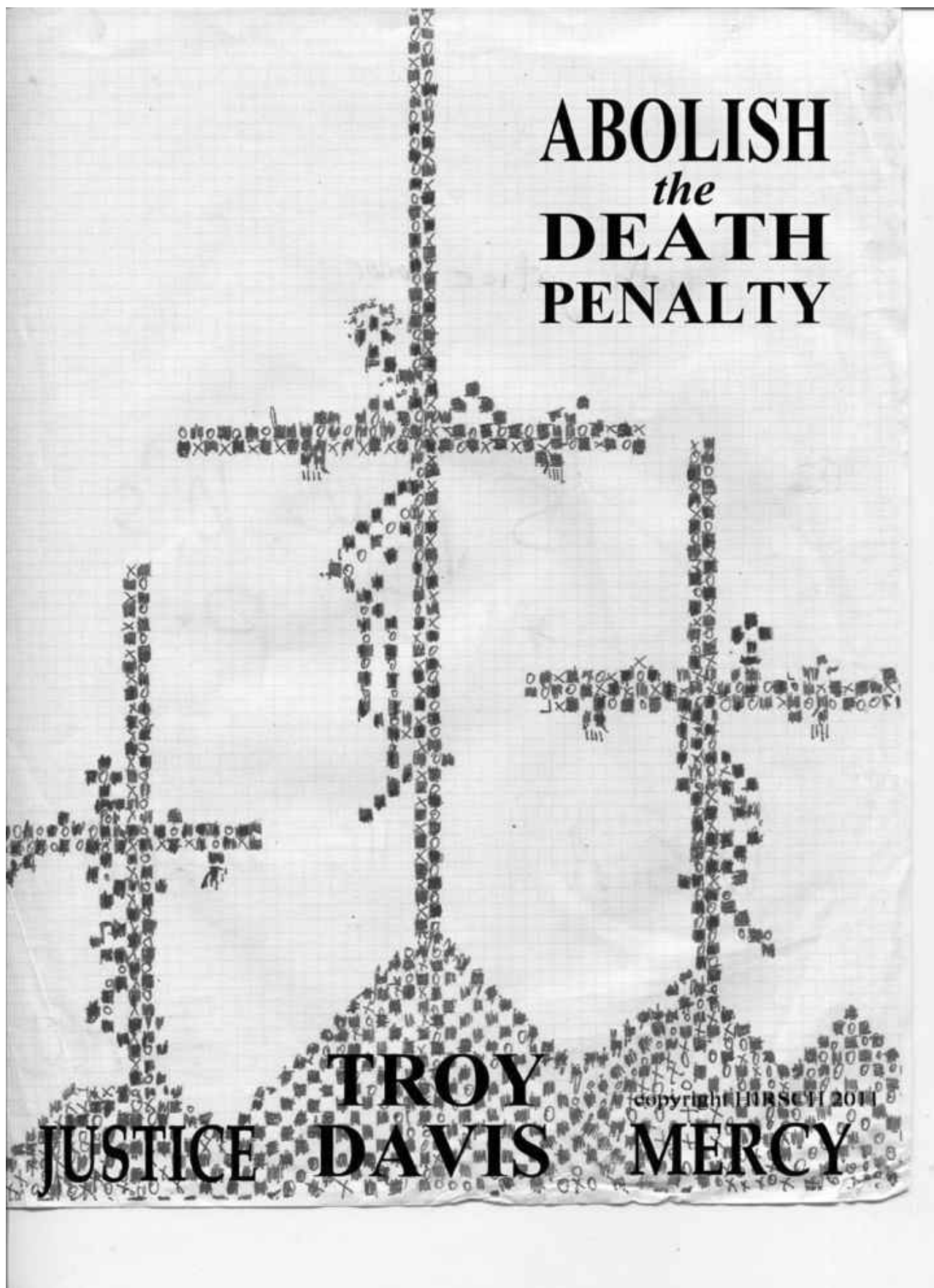
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William Attaway

—continued from page 8

guard, the column was finished and “It’s a dream come true.” To have a signature piece of Venice art of his own making in his own backyard, in what his kids now call “Papa’s Park” truly is the kind of gratification any artist would aspire to. He does say it was not a pleasure to work with the City, and that things really came together in a great example of community over bureaucracy to get the project completed.

That community is the same thing that has kept Attaway in Venice all these years. “There is a love of family here, and a love of art that has kept Abbot Kinney’s vision intact. Venice still resonates with that intention.” Of course, Attaway has seen the changes we all have, but as he sees it, “Venice was a scary place, you had to watch how you walked, there were major shoot-outs you would not believe right in front of here, crack trucks, gang murders, people were literally giving away their mortgages,” so the fact that I didn’t even think about all that when I came to see him is actually a really big improvement.

“It’s not gentrification that splits us apart, it’s War-ification. How our money is spent, what programs get funded ... war over art, greed and instant gratification ... not looking at the big picture ... The more fighting that goes on outside, the more goes on inside.” In order to combat that, Attaway feels that people need to stand up and revolt. How can everyday people do that? “People don’t know how to wait for their food to grow anymore. You can grow your own food. You can drink lots of water. You can ride bikes and not use cars.”

To that end, Attaway’s new series of paintings is called “Gardens”, and his favorite place to have coffee in Venice is in his own garden. He thinks there should be signs when you enter Venice that say, “When you enter Venice, Bikes have right of way”. There should be vacuums in the alleys so you can suck up the glass and stuff so everyone doesn’t puncture their tires. There should be naked Police. Naked Police will stop violence, people would just take one look at them and stop.” We talked about Cityhood for Venice, which he’s all for and said, “Venice IS the original Hood City, so, yeah. Everyone who goes to Disneyland comes to Venice the next day for free to chill, so we should be getting more than the 1 percent from the City Of L.A.”

Attaway thinks that Venice is a place “where a lot of people have made their lifestyle dreams come true.” From skating back in the day with Tony Alva, having the dream of a skatepark on the beach come true, they MADE that happen. From a mailman who does his route and then goes fishing every night on the pier, he MADE that happen. “Look at the drum circle - I call it the Chaos Circle - The Boardwalk is the end of the Earth. I love it.”

You can see Attaway cruising around on his bike: Getting food at the La Isla Bonita taco truck by Gold’s Gym that he did mosaics for. Eating at Axe. or Danny’s Deli for matzo ball soup, or James Beach for chocolate souffle. Or late-night octopus and martinis at Hal’s (“I want my art hung in Hal’s when I grow up”). Drinking at Venice Ale House or Oscar’s (“the #1 new hot spot”).

You can see Attaway’s art all over town (The Column. Mosaics on beach bathrooms. Mosaic at Tabor Courts VCHC. Etc...Etc...), see art documentaries on him by his friend, Venice local Christopher Gallo, or just go by 334 Sunset on Saturday or Sunday and see if a Flying Man statue is outside. That means you can go in and see his art works in progress. There might be musician friends playing, there might be a chef friend cooking up a feast, and “What happens, happens.”

As true a Venice statement as any I’ve heard. ☺



THE 27TH ANNUAL ABBOT KINNEY FESTIVAL

—continued from page 9

complaint coming from every person I bumped into that day, that WHERE were our local musicians at our local Festival?! I’d say I was really mad about it, but it’s hard to be actually mad about anything when everyone’s having a good time seeing everyone you like where you live. But still. May I please help book the stages next year? Thanks.

The Abbot Kinney Festival is one of the best people watching events of the planet, and from one end to the other it’s an entire smorgasbord of people and stuff to gape at.

I love it when the Samba School splits the crowd to dance and bang drums among the people walking the street, and everyone stands back to watch and smile and FEEL the spirit of community and fun that pervades that special moment every year.

People were hanging out of the windows above Abbot’s Habit to watch, the Firemen of Station 63 were clapping along (and no porn actresses were spotted hanging from the truck this day, I’m happy to report to knowers of recent Venice lore), tiny kids

were showing off their capoeira skills, and the whole crowd was supremely into it.

After doing some laps of the street (and having no bands we were absolutely required to see due to friendship or support of our local artists), we went up to our friend’s balcony that overlooks the entire hubbub of the Brig beer garden. Again, the greatest people watching ever.

This year there were dueling dancers outside the fence, a big Red Devil carrying a sign (“The Devil Repents!”) and a cowboy in short shorts that was FEELING it.

And feeling it. For song after song (from the really good reggae d.j. spinning in the Brig lot). After song. We admired his stamina. And the way more and more (drinking) strangers would step in to dance with him. Good good times.

Right around 6 p.m. the fog started to return, the autumn light began its getting darker earlier thing, and that annual mass clearing of the people began at the Venice Boulevard end of Abbot Kinney, heading down toward Main Street. It’s amazing to see how quickly it all evaporates, with the whoosh of street cleaners rolling by, the clanking of tent poles falling down, and slurry speech of passersby yelling to each other getting fainter and fainter by the minute. Soon enough it’s all over again for the year, and everyone winds up collapsing at someone’s nearby pad, re-hashing the day’s events and looking ahead to all the good stuff that will go down between now and the re-telling of it to the friends you’ll see at next year’s jamboree.

Let’s make it good! ☺

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Defend Venice

The fight to save a Monterey Cypress tree.

From the Beachhead Archives, Sept. 1975.

Read the Story, then get the T-Shirt



In the Slammer

By Ron Guenther

I was one of the three arrested on May 27 in the old Monterey Cypress tree on No. Venice Blvd. at Mildred, along with six other Venice people who were arrested on the ground.

My crime was protesting the destruction of the tree - to the two developers William E. Keenan and Michael Epstein, both of Marina Del Rey, and to the contractor, Robert Weiss, of the Marina Construction Company - from the old tree itself, instead of from the sidewalk like a good, normal citizen. Children had been playing in this friendly old tree for at least 25 years, and the house next to it had provided shelter for the same family for 20. The tree was 80 to 100 years old, and in good, healthy condition.

The family was removed, and the house and tree bulldozed by Epstein, Keenan, and Weiss, to make room for a Security-CaCa type apartment house, which could have been designed around the tree, had the developers wished.

Venice Town Council people determined the exact species of the tree from a beautiful and gracious woman, Dr. Mildred Mathias, of the UCLA botany department. The Monterey Cypress grows naturally in only two places on earth - at Point Cypress on the Monterey Peninsula 17-mile drive, and at Point Lobos in the Point Lobos botanical preserve. Dr. Mathias also emphasized the tremendous regenerative powers of the tree. If the root system and stump are left intact, they will usually sprout, and grow again into a full size tree.

We placed a message on the Marina Construction Co. phone-recorder pleading that the stump and root system of the tree be spared, to regenerate into a new tree. The stump was bulldozed a few days later, and hauled off to the dump. The bulldozer operator told us that he had received strict orders to not release so much as one acorn of this magnificent, rare old tree to anyone from the community who wished to have it.

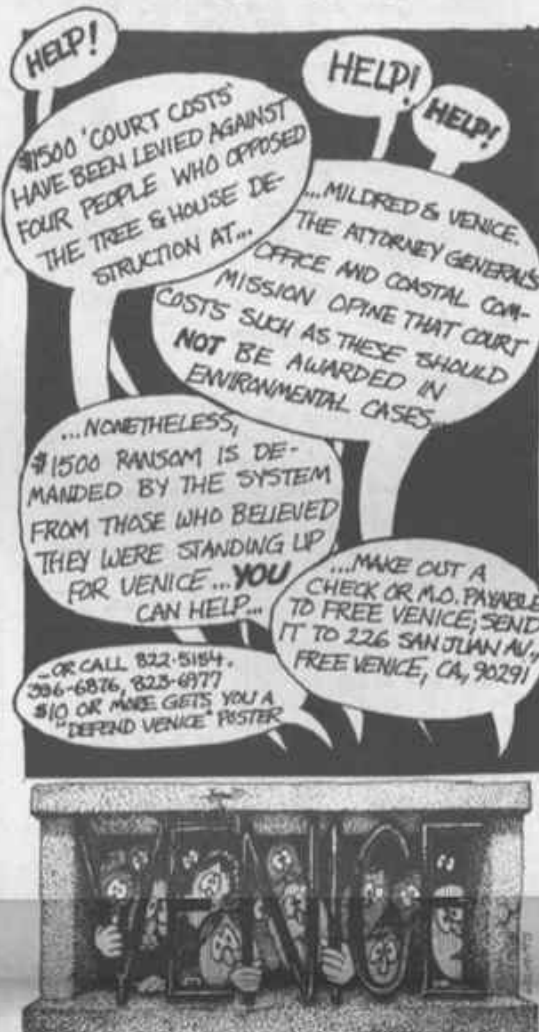
Protesting this act of environmental and social madness almost resulted in serious injury to those in the tree, as the tree was dismembered and ripped apart by chainsaw with the three still clinging to its trunk and branches. According to what passes for justice in these times, in due course we were charged with "Trespass J," which means that in the eyes of those responsible for upholding law and order, we had interfered with the right, of the two speculators and their hired tree killers, to use their newly acquired property as they absolutely saw fit, in other words, with their right to murder this rare, beautiful old tree and to bulldoze the low-rent house for their own private gain.

So after the usual routine rapport with the developer's point of view by the West Los Angeles City Attorney's refusal to listen to community witnesses, to investigate the serious crimes committed against those in the tree, or to respond in any other way to the legal needs of the Venice community, and after legal maneuverings (handled beautifully by attorney Marge Buckley) which resulted in a completely matter-of-fact guilty plea on my part to Trespass J, the sentence was handed down by the court: \$100 or 5 days, no suspension of sentence, and 1 year of summary probation - obey all laws. The probation part was easiest for me to understand. It meant forget your environmental and social conscience, and quit getting in the way of the Venice real estate speculation and development money, or else.

Since the system's impacted money-greed was the very reason for the tree's destruction in the first place, paying the \$100 fine was just as clearly unacceptable to me. So in another due course of time, I appeared on July 17 to begin three days (two credited for Venice jail dead time) in the Los Angeles County Central Slams. Richard Clark went to jail directly from the courtroom on July 10, Dennis Gunter, whose picture is on the tree poster, paid the fine. Charges against the Venice Town Council people and others on the ground were dismissed.

The place was unbelievable. You just can't believe it unless you've been there. For starters, the computer broke down, which I understand happens regularly. The jail can handle a few thousand people with the computer, but with it, the sky's the limit. When the thing broke down, the jail was chaos. Busloads of newly arrested prisoners just stacked up in holding cells for interminable hours, with new busloads arriving regularly. The guards naturally rip off and trash can anything like magazines or books, so

that for 6-8 hours, hundreds of people just sat there on stainless steel benches (everything in the place is either stainless steel, painted steel, or grey concrete) getting blood circulation problems, flat asses, and very hungry. Standing up for a few minutes to stretch is forbidden, naturally, as this might make the suffering less intense, and presents a threat to "jail discipline." At the booking window, I reported



that I had a long-time allergy to tobacco smoke, and wished to be placed in the "No Smoking" section of this County facility. After a moment of stunned silence the computer's brain almost blew out again on this request, the guards did a Ho, Ho, Ho and refused to enter "tobacco smoke allergy" as a medical problem; can't fight City Hall you know, and besides there isn't room on the form. There just ain't a "No Smoking" section in this jail, and since jail is a place to suffer in anyway, if you're allergic to tobacco smoke, then all the better.

Cigarettes are sold in the jail by the carton, and are a traditional means of jail exchange and money. There are many heavy smokers in most jails, and no relief at all for non-smokers.

After more hours of processing, insecticide treatment, pictures, VD tests, chest X-rays (two in a row for the guy ahead of me because the technician screwed the first one, so sorry, happy cancer) and blood test, you get your jail "blues" mattress, and blanket, and at last home-sweet-home, your very own bunk in a 10x12 cell shared by five other people who

have learned to be very careful in talk-to newly arrived strangers. On the way to your cage, "Aw right, assholes, right shoulder to the wall, march, no talking, hands in your pockets, eyes straight ahead, if you don't bother the deputies, they won't bother you!"

You are warned to sleep away from the electric power gate which opens and closes the cell. It turns out that once the gate is set in motion from the remote control center, it is extremely powerful, and according to the guard, a few people have awoken from deep sleep to discover their arms, hands, or feet flopping on the concrete corridor outside the cell. Anything sticking through both the fixed bars and the bars of the gate is crushed and severed by the moving bars as the gate is opened or closed, sometimes without warning. It is just part of the brutal force-mystique of the place not to put a simple clutch release in the mechanism somewhere to prevent this.

Intense cigarette smoke all night. Reveille arrives dramatically at 5am with an announcement on the public address system, and then starts one of the most mind-boggling devices of torture that the ingenious mind of man has ever dreamed up. For 18 solid hours the most excruciatingly loud disc jockey prattle, rock and roll, music of other kinds, and noise of all kinds is blared through the P.A. system until the speakers distort, the walls rattle, and the victims go slowly mad. I had my ears stuffed full of chewed up toilet paper and paper towels, but there was no way of escaping this premeditated and deliberate torture. It is impossible to think, talk or read a book (although books are available from a very dedicated and gentle County librarian). The level of noise pollution is illegal under federal, state, county and city law, and would be prohibited anywhere but in the man's jailhouse.

The reason for this constant high noise level on the P.A. system is fiendishly clever; when the noise is out suddenly, the silence hits you like a thunderclap, and in the midst of the silence comes the voice of man-god booming down with an announcement: Gates opening, freeway-time, chow, someone wanted (about every hour someone turns up missing in this giant building), prowler squad to the rescue, etc. And do you ever notice that announcement: You can't hear it, but notice it. And then comes the noise again. 18 hours of it. It goes off from midnight until 6am; six hours silence out of 24.

I missed eating my first breakfast because I took time to pour four cups of coffee for brothers at the table. You have barely time enough to sit down with your food tray before it's time to move out. A person could use both hands to shovel food into one's mouth, and still not have enough time to finish eating what you are given to eat. The garbage can is the best fed thing in the place. Hungry people are forced to throw good edible fruit, cereal, bread, eggs, pancakes, milk, meat, and vegetables into the garbage. My guess (and that of one or two of the long-timers) is that one of the guards operates a hog business on the side, and that the hogs thrive for free on what hungry people are not allowed to eat.

The place is institutionalized, lifeless, ugliness; a place of cold grey concrete and clanging steel gates. And a place of brutality, mostly mental, unless you incur the attention of the "prowlers", a squad of extra-heavy-duty guards who roam the corridors, "maintaining jail discipline" in their own inimitable way, reflecting the concrete and steel.

The jail is run by a Mickey-Macho master race, and fed by the courts for the benefit of us folks who don't know to stay out of other people's newly acquired old trees when there's profit in chopping them down, or who otherwise are unable to cope with this society, it's money-oriented greed, it's machine madness, and it's mindless destruction of the life-support system that all life on this planet depends on.

Right now, the emphasis is on spending huge amounts of tax money to expand the jail into the surrounding area. One can see the scars of new construction all around.

But someday the time will come for this stupid, ugly, lifeless, health and mind destroying, antiquated human storage heap, brutal excuse for the existence of the present court and punishment system, and just all-around piece of intolerable shit, to go the way of the dinosaurs.

I'll be there with my sledgehammer and dustpan to help this place along into its well-earned final resting place in the dustbin of history.



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Defend Venice t-shirts now on sale in white, blue, tan and gray in sizes from small to extra-large. Stock on hand only \$15. Additional orders: \$20.

Call 310-396-2525 or send us an email to Beachhead@freevenice.org specifying your size and color.

We'll let you know if it's available, or if we can special order it. Then pay by a check to Beachhead, PO Box 2, Venice 90294 or by credit card by clicking the Donate button at www.freevenice.org

Community Events – day by day

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Calendar Compiled By Karl Abrams

Sunday, October 2

• 7:30pm - **“Triangle” a one-woman show about the Triangle Shirt Waist Company fire** performed by Elaine Ocasio. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Tuesday, October 4

• 3pm - **It's Showtime!** Movie screening of recently released movies and old favorites. Abbot Kinney Public Library. Free.

Wednesday, October 5

• 9:30am - **Hearing: Ocean Front Walk Draft Ordinance.** Expo Center, 3980 S. Bill Robertson Lane, L.A.
• 11:30am - **Toddler Storytime** for newborns to 3 years old. Join us for stories, music, laughs and more. Venice Library, Free.
• 6:45-9pm - **VNC Land Use and Planning Committee Meeting.** Always Open to the Public. Westminster School Auditorium. Free.

Thursday, October 6

• 11:30am - **Mass Mobilization: Corporations/ wealthy should pay higher taxes to rebuild California neighborhoods.** California Plaza, 350 S Grand Ave. Downtown L.A.
• 7-10pm – **LA Gypsy Band** record release show. Talking Stick. Free.
• 7pm - **7 Dudley Cinema.** Film/discussion **LSD in the 60's.** Beyond Baroque. Donation.

Friday, October 7

• 7-11pm - **First Friday** on Abbot Kinney Blvd. Lots of people and open shops. Free.
• 7-10pm - **Breast Cancer Fundraiser.** The Harlot Salon. 1641 Abbot Kinney Blvd.
• 7:30pm - **Fred Moramarco and George Kalmar** read their poetry. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.
• 8-10pm - **Bohemian Exchange fashion shows.** 1358 Abbot Kinney Blvd. Free.

Saturday, October 8

• 9am-12pm - **WE Garden Workday OASIS** in the Community. Westminster Elementary School. Free.
• 7:30pm - **Alice Friman and Terry van Vliet** read poetry. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Sunday, October 9

• Noon - **World Homeless Day with Venice performance artists.** 323 Ocean Front Walk. Parade 1pm. Bring signs and friends.
• 7-9pm - **Community meeting on the Venice Post Office** and an **Edward Bieberman film about the artist who created the Venice Post Office mural.** SPARC. Free.
• 7:30-10pm - **Subversive Cinema.** 212 Pier. Free.
• 7:30pm - **Douglas Cirelli and Mark Lipman** read poetry. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

iors, children \$5, members free.

Tuesday, October 11

• 7-10pm - **A Night of Festive Musical Goodness,** Hosted by Danny Moynahan. Talking Stick. Free.

Wednesday, October 12

• 7-10pm - **Suzy Williams sings** at Danny’s Deli. Truly amazing jazz/blues. Free.

Saturday, October 15

• 7:30 pm - **Noir in poetry, fiction and film.** Speaker, Robert Polito. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Sunday, October 16

• 4pm - **Second Annual Beyond Baroque Poetry Contest readings and prizes.** Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Tuesday, October 18

• 7-9:30pm - **VNC Board Meeting.** Always Open to the Public. Westminster School Auditorium.

Thursday, October 20

• 6pm - **Venice Art Crawl.** Find the maps online or go to OFW and Windward. Free.
• 7:30pm - **Michael McClure birthday reading** with Michael C. Ford hosted by S.A. Griffin. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Friday, October 21

• 7:30pm - **Wanda Coleman reads.** Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Saturday, October 22

• 2:30-4:30pm - **TEDx Event 'Fabric as a Medium for Beauty.** Electric Lodge. \$10.
• 7:30-10pm - **Multimedia Event** - Beyond Gesamtkunstwerk: **Poetry & Dance.** Beyond Baroque. \$7.

Tuesday, October 25

• 7pm - **Bioneers Meeting.** G2 Gallery. Free.
• 6:30pm-7:30pm - The **Venice Book Club** meets for their selection of the month. Light refreshments served. Abbot Kinney Public Library.

Saturday, October 29

• 12-6pm - **Venice Japanese American Marker fundraiser.** VIP Sushi & Sake reception 1-2pm. **Screening of three short films on the Japanese American internment during World War II.** Beyond Baroque. \$100. Screening only \$30. For more information call Phyllis Hayashibara 310-390-1576 and/or www.venicejamm.org
• 6:30-9pm - **Halloween Artist Reception.** Wear your favorite costume G2 Gallery. \$5 donation.

Location Guide

• Abbot Kinney Public Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd, 310-821-1769.
• Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. 310-822-3006 - beyondbaroque.org
• Burton Chace Park, 13650 Mindanao Way - marinadelrey.lacounty.gov
• Danny’s Deli, 23 Windward Ave.
• Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave, 310-306-1854 - electriclodge.org
• G2 Gallery, 1503 Abbot Kinney Blvd 310-452-2842.
• Hal’s Bar and Grill, 1349 Abbot Kinney Blvd., 310-396-3105 - halsbarandgrill.com
• Oakwood Recreation Center, 757 California Ave.
• Pacific Resident Theatre, 703½ Venice Blvd. 822-8392 pacificresidenttheatre.com
• SPARC - Social and Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd. 822-9560 x15.
• Talking Stick Coffee Lounge, 1411c Lincoln Blvd. 450-6052 - thetalkingstick.net
• Vera Davis Center, 610 California Ave. 310-305-1865.
• Westminster Elementary School, 1010 Abbot Kinney Blvd. (enter auditorium from Westminster Ave.) 310-606-2015.

Ongoing Events

Music

• 8pm-12am - **Hal’s Bar and Grill** features Live Jazz, Sunday and Monday nights. Free.
• 8:30pm - **TKO Comedy’s “Open Mic”** for comics, musicians. 212 Pier. Free. Every Thursday.
• 12-2pm - Saturday & Sunday; **Music at Uncle Darrow’s.** 2560 Lincoln Blvd. Free.
• 5-9pm – **Venice Street Legends.** Venice Bistro, OFW & Dudley. Every Wednesday. Free.
• 6-10pm - 2nd Thursday - **Psychedelic Surf Rock.** Mollusk, 1600 Pacific Ave. Free.

Movies

• 5:30pm - **Abbot Kinney Public Library** Thursday Movie Night. Call 310-821-1769 for title.
• 6-10pm - **7 Dudley Cinema** - First Thursdays at Beyond Baroque. Free.

Kids

• 6:30pm - Abbot Kinney Public Library Children’s **Pajama Storytime.** Second, fourth Tuesday evenings. Free.

Miscellaneous

• 7-10pm - MOM: **Meditations On Media.** 3rd Wednesdays. Beyond Baroque. Free.
• 11:30am-2:30pm – **The Venice Oceanarium** (a museum without walls). Venice Pier. Every Sunday, weather permitting. Free.
• 6-8pm - **McLuhan-Finnegans Wake Reading Club.** Lloyd Taber - Marina Del Rey Library, 4533 Admiralty Way. First Tuesday of the month. Free.

Computers

• Venice Library offers a variety of **Free Computer Classes.** 310-821-1769.
• Vera Davis Center offers **free computer use:** M-Th 10am-Noon and 1pm-3pm; Fri 1-3pm.

Food

• Vera Davis Center. 12:30pm - 2nd and 4th Thursdays - **Free Food Distribution.**
• Vera Davis Center - **Sign up for Food Stamps (EBT Cards).** Call for date and time. 310-305-1865.
• 1st Baptist Church: 5-7pm Mondays - **Hot Meals; Pre-packs:** 2-3:30pm Saturdays, Westminster & 7th St.

Get Your Local Event Listed

Email your time, date and a brief description to Calendar@freevenice.org by the 20th of the month. If you charge for your event, please consider taking out a \$25 or larger advertisement.



Other Venice Film Festival at Beyond Baroque

Thursday, October 13

• 6-12pm - Opening Night. Music, cocktails and Attaway’s art show. Films in competition. \$30.

Friday, October 14

• 8-10:30pm - Short Films in competition and after party. \$30.

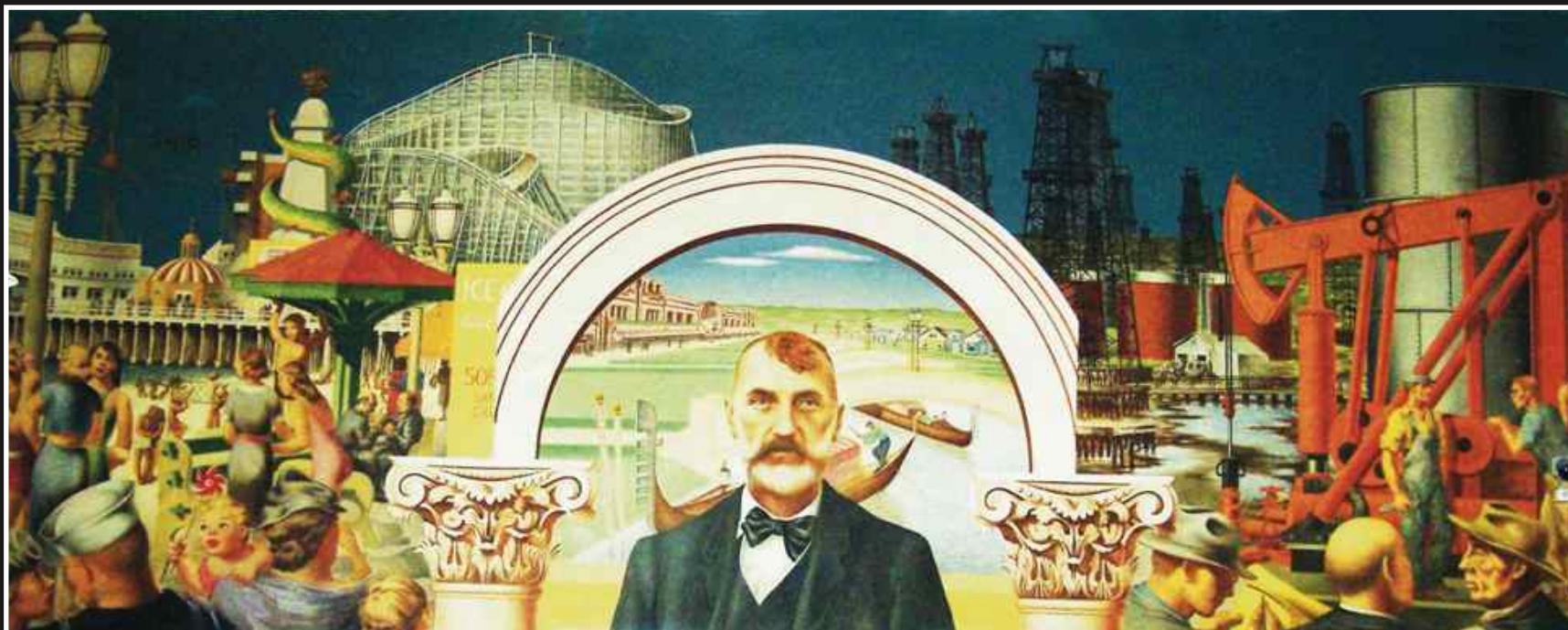
Saturday, October 15

• 10:30am-11pm - Films in competition all day and Music videos (9pm on). \$10/film.

Sunday, October 16

• 6-9pm - Feature films in competition. \$10/film.
• 10pm - After party at Hotel Erwin.





Community Meeting and Update on our Historic Post Office

and

Special Screening of the film Brush With Life: The Art of Being Edward Biberman

7pm Sunday, October 9

at SPARC (old jail), 685 Venice Blvd.

A film by Jeff Kaufman

Discussion after the film

with Jeff Kaufman and Suzanne Zada

310-
396-
2525

Beachhead@freevenice.org
Sponsored by the Beachhead

Edward Biberman, a well-known artist was the creator of the Venice Post Office mural, which is now in jeopardy.

"Edward Biberman was an extraordinary artist, and also much more than that. I was totally captivated by this film." —Howard Zinn

FREE



The Japanese American Memorial Marker Committee and Beyond Baroque invite you to a benefit for a monument on the northwest corner of Venice and Lincoln Boulevards (plaque text on reverse).

Saturday, October 29, 2011 (2:00 - 5:30 PM)

Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Bl. Venice, CA 90291

Three Short Films on the Japanese American Internment during World War II

"Music Man of Manzanar"

The story of Lou Frizzell
Directed by Brian Maeda

"Stand Up for Justice"

The story of Ralph Lazo
Directed by John Esaki

"Days of Waiting"

The story of Estelle Ishigo
Directed by Steven Okazaki

1:00 - 2:00 PM

VIP Sushi & Sake Reception (\$100)

Special musical performance by
Mary Kageyama Nomura, "The Songbird of Manzanar"

Also performing: The Shoo Flies and
Suzy Williams, "The Songbird of Venice"

TICKETS (both ticket options include free DVD)

VIP Reception: \$100 (VIP ticket also includes reserved seating for screening)
Screening Only: \$25 (If purchased by October 22nd; or \$30 at the door)

- For advanced ticket reservations (your reservations will be at will call), send by mail to: VAC/VJAMM, P.O. Box 993, Venice, CA 90294.
- Make checks payable to "VCHC/VAC" with "VJAMM" in the memo.
- For more information, go to www.venicejamm.org or call Phyllis Hayashibara at (310) 390-1576.

About the Venice Japanese American Memorial Marker Committee's Event

The Venice Japanese American Memorial Marker Committee will host a benefit screening with co-sponsor Beyond Baroque in Venice on Saturday, October 29, 2011. Three outstanding directors of Japanese American internment-themed films have generously donated their work for the benefit screening, which begins at 2 pm.

Filmmaker Brian Maeda, who was born in the War Relocation Authority concentration camp at Manzanar, will emcee the screenings, which begins with his "Music Man of Manzanar." This thirty-minute film incorporates re-enactments to tell the story of actor Lou Frizzell, who taught music and drama to teenagers interned at Manzanar, and features Brian's brother, Arnold Maeda, today an inspirational member of the VJAMM committee.

Director John Esaki's Visual Communications production, "Stand Up for Justice," dramatizes the decision of Mexican-Irish American Ralph Lazo to accompany his Japanese American high school friends to Manzanar.

Academy-award winning director Steven Okazaki's documentary, "Days of Waiting," tells of artist Estelle Peck, who married Arthur Ishigo in Mexico when such intermarriage was illegal in California, and found acceptance among her husband's Japanese American friends and family while incarcerated in the American concentration camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

A VIP Sushi and Sake Reception will precede the screening, beginning at 1:00 p.m., featuring Mary Kageyama Nomura, known as "the Song Bird of Manzanar." Mary and the Modernaires sang at club dances for the youth imprisoned in Manzanar, and Mary has graciously agreed to sing again on Saturday, October 29. She will share the stage with the Song Bird of Venice, Suzy Williams, and a performance by the Shoo Flies. Feast from the East's Suzanne Toji has also generously donated her famous chicken salad for the VIPs.

General admission will be \$25 in advance, or \$30 at the door, and includes a DVD of one of the films screened. The VIP Sushi and Sake Reception should be ordered in advance for \$100, and includes reserved seating and a DVD.