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JULY
2011
#357

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Venice Incorporated 100 Years Ago

-See Page 5



Venice's oldest Mural in our Post Office lobby. Painted by Edward Biberman, 1941

Photo: Jim Smith

Community Pressure Saves Vera Davis Center

By Roger Linnett

The City tried to push one past the Oakwood Community, and the Community pushed back. The result is that the city's "done deal" of turning the social service center into an art gallery run by the Cultural Affairs Department (CAD) won't be happening. Instead, the Community Development Department (CDD) will continue as the managing entity of the Center.

Venice and Oakwood residents in need will not be turned away when they seek help at the Center, located at 610 California Ave. While the majority of people seeking help are Black and Latino residents, Venetians of all colors and neighborhoods rallied to say no to the City's plans.

A meeting of the Venice Town Council galvanized a standing-room only crowd of mostly Oakwood residents on April 21. Out of that meeting came petitions, coordinated phone calls and personal contacts with Councilmember Bill Rosendahl's office and with officials of the CAD and the CDD. Neighborhood Council Board member Ivonne Guzman was instrumental in demanding answers for the sudden change in function for the Center, answers that City bureaucrats usually didn't have.

Self-government of the Center became a real possibility with the formation of the Vera Davis Collaborative, made up of representatives of a number of service agencies operating out of the Center that included the Latino Resource Organization, Venice 2000, Venice Bulldogs, the Tech Team and the Mildred Cursh Foundation. Outside agencies such as the Holiday Venice Tenants Association, Venice Community Housing Corporation and the Beachhead also lent their support.

In a letter to the "Tenants of the Vera Davis Community Center" dated June 20, Carolyn Weiss, Director of the Central-West Regional Area of the CDD, stated that, "Although it was the intention of the City to transfer the VDC management to the Cultural Affairs Dept., the research and discussions showed that the transfer is 'unfeasible' at this time."

There were several issues that influenced the decision against the transfer, chief among them that the CDA had no staff or funding available to run the center at this time. Furthermore, an RFP (Request for Proposal) to select an agency to manage the facility would not be ready for release by the City Council for approximately 12 months.

Another factor, as reported in last month's Beachhead, was Councilman Rosendahl's office find-

ing \$60,000 in General Fund monies, now grown to \$80,000 to run VDC for the coming year. As such the CDD intends to keep the current operating days and hours at VDC, and are amenable to schedule changes to accommodate program activities.

There will be some changes, however. Long-time Center Director, Cliff McClain, will be transferred to the Central-West administrative offices. He will be replaced by three part-time staffers under the supervision of Eddie Nuno, who will be working out of the Tom Bradley Center.

This change creates a crisis in continuing the food distribution activities, which many local residents depend on. These new staff personnel will not be able to use a City-owned vehicle for the twice-weekly trips for food procurement for the center's free food program, which McClain had always done.

-continued on page 3

SAVE THE VENICE POST OFFICE

✉ Email Janice Hahn. She will likely win the runoff election, July 12, for Congress. Send an email to Elaine@JaniceHahn.com.

✉ Ask her to take action now to ask the Postal Service to delay a decision on selling the historic Venice Post Office until she takes office. Ask her to continue Jane Harman's ban on the sale of any post offices in CD-36. See inside for details.

See Page 6 for more ways to help.

LIBYA:
718 Bombing Casualties
AFGHANISTAN:
1,642 U.S. Dead - 44 this month
IRAQ:
4,466 U.S. Dead - 12 this month
33,080 U.S. Wounded
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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.

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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.

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Urges Letter Writing Campaign Opposing Blue Bus Cutback

Dear Beachhead,
We have an upcoming problem with the # 2 Blue Bus which runs from Windward Circle to Abbot Kinney, up California to the Vera Davis Center, the Oakwood Recreation Center, Ralph's and Rite-Aid, Mark Twain Middle School and Venice High School. Sometime in August they are eliminating the #2 bus. They will run the # 1 bus from Windward Circle up to Walgrove Avenue on a 20 minute frequency during peak periods only. Peak periods are 6:30 - 9:30 AM and 3:30 - 5:30 pm. Outside of those hours, the bus will only run every half hour. Many economically-disadvantaged people live in this neighborhood, people who do not have cars. They are dependent on the #2 bus to get them to jobs, school and doctors. Waiting a half hour will be a burden on those who don't work normal hours, waiting a half hour will be a burden to seniors going to their doctors in Santa Monica. Waiting a half hour is potential trouble for a middle school student looking for diversion. Waiting a half hour with your toddlers in hand is a burden. Going to the bank or grocery store or pharmacy becomes a burden when you have to wait so long. In a few years ridership will go down, and then they will justify eliminating the Venice route altogether. We need a letter-writing campaign to restore service at minimal 20 minute intervals during the day, all day. This still requires waiting, but is more doable. And while we are at it, we need to ask for benches. There are NO BENCHES at the Windward Circle. Waiting a half hour without a place to sit is onerous.

Please write your letter or call the following people

Richard Bloom, Mayor of Santa Monica
1685 Main St, Room 209, Santa Monica 90401
310-458-8201 council@smgov.net

Joe Stichter, Assistant Director
Santa Monica Big Bus
1660-7th St, Santa Monica 90491
310-458-1975 ext 5823 joe.stichter@smgov.net

Councilman Bill Rosendahl
7166 W. Manchester Ave., Westchester, 90045
310-568-3946 bill.rosendahl@lacity.org

Laurel Rosen, President
Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce
1234 6th St #100, Santa Monica 90401
info@smchamber.com

Carolyn Rios

Commission of Errors

Dear Beachhead,
Thanks to the newspaper for running the article I submitted last month, entitled *Commission of Errors*. The Commission did make one error, it did not provide a record that Councilman Bill Rosendahl filed a conflict of interest statement when requested. The Commission later contacted me to provide a record that Rosendahl's statement was filed.

John Davis



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Clarification from Boston Dawna

Beachhead and Miss Kennedy,
Your facts are wrong. The beachhead has printed lies about me.
Yes, I did neighborhood watch for almost 40 years and bought my police scanner myself. Yes, I was at the dumping site. It was right under my bedroom window. Miss Thompson was NOT there. They plead guilty.
We may not see eye to eye on certain issues but I would NEVER do anything to hurt anyone.
As for any connection between Alex Thompson and myself there is NONE. We met about a month before I left Venice. Not only do I have no affiliation with her, I don't approve of what she has done in Venice or continues to do.
I have NOTHING to do with MISS THOMPSON or Miss Thompson's web site Venice311.org. I never have and never will. Check your facts and print a retraction and an apology or we will settle this in a courtroom.
Thank you
Boston Dawna aka Dawna Chaet

Neighbors in an Uproar Over Condo Development

By Roger Linnett

A meeting, June 20, between prospective developers of the property at 522 So. Venice Blvd. (across from of the Abbot Kinney library) and neighborhood residents went pretty much as one might expect. The meeting room at The Bible Tabernacle Church on Washington Way was charged from the get go. The developers were introduced by Sarah Denison from the VNC's Land Use and Planning Committee. Reaction to their designs for the property was one of instant and unanimous displeasure. The part of the proposal which drew the most ire was the intention of purchasing the triangular space at the corner of South Venice Blvd. and Ocean Ave. from the city. The residents were wholehearted against the idea of building out this area, which would substantially reduce visibility at the intersection. Stories were told of past instances of near accidents and pedestrian-involved close calls. Concerns were also raised about the increase in traffic on Mildred Ave., onto which the complex's driveway would egress. According to the developer's consultant, Eric Lieberman, who gave the presentation, the plans call for 12 units in what is called a "small lot" subdivision. The difference from a townhouse complex being that each unit would own the ground upon which their unit stood. The units would also be separate from each other, with about six inches between them. Although the presenters explained repeatedly that their proposal was not carved in stone, the residents were unassuaged, and the 40 or so in attendance were resolute in opposing the project. More meetings on this controversial development are being planned. The VNC's Land and Use Planning Committee is scheduled to hear from residents and any possible revisions of the developer's plans. ☺

Correction:

The Beachhead would like to make a correction regarding Calvin Moss's article, "Little Church of Horrors" in our June 2011 edition. The youth gang referred to was misidentified as the "Suicidals." It is our understanding that the Suicidals are not a gang, but a multi-racial social club.

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Venice’s Lizard King 40 Years On

By Lynne Bronstein

It was 40 years ago on July 3, 1971, that a titan of the 1960s rock scene passed away in Paris. Jim Morrison had gone there to get away from his turbulent career as front man for the Doors. His death was officially attributed at the time to a heart attack, which seemed strange for a young man of 27 but not surprising for someone who was legendary for taking any and all physical risks.

The last 40 years have seen Morrison’s image take on all the facets of a mythical hero, the guy who lives out everyone’s fantasies. There has been an outpouring of books, films, re-released recordings, articles, web sites, new publications and recordings of Morrison’s own work, tribute bands, and a reorganized version of the Doors with a new lead singer.

The latest tribute is a bar in Paris called the Lezard King, devoted to the memory of Morrison. (“I am the Lizard King” was his boast in a lengthy musical-poetic work called “Celebration of the Lizard”.) The venue, which opened in September 2010 at 11 Rue de Tournelles, close to the Bastille, features Doors-themed décor and drinks named for Doors songs. The owner, Christophe Maillet, is described as “a hardcore fan of the Doors” who invested his life savings to build his dream, according to the bar’s web site.

According to a communiqué sent by another Doors fan, Stuart Henderson, who had in turn received information via a Facebook connection, Maillet has received a letter from lawyers representing the Doors, challenging the theme of Lezard King.

The letter asks that Maillet destroy all the decorations and change the names of the bar’s cocktails. The letter asserts that the client does not wish to see Morrison commemorated at an establishment that sells liquor.

For better or worse, the Jim Morrison image is irrevocably linked to his propensity for alcoholic consumption. At this stage, with portrayals of Morrison’s drunken binges in the Oliver Stone film “The Doors,” and numerous written accounts of his exploits, there is no denying that drink was a factor in Morrison’s life, although it was not the only thing in his life and it was not what fueled his talent. Another Doors fan, Gilles Yepremian, stated in an email to this reporter that there are about 20 bars in the Netherlands that have a Doors logo and allow smoking of grass and hash (substances that Morrison appears to not have been a stranger to either).

Henderson’s email opines that surviving Doors member Ray Manzarek has been “exploiting” the Morrison image for years. “But Jim Morrison doesn’t only belong to the Doors,” he adds.

On July 3, Paris venue Le Bataclan will feature a Doors tribute concert with former members Manzarek and Robbie Krieger. Some avid fans of Morrison are asking that fans boycott the tribute concert to show support for Lezard King and for the right of Doors fans to have their Jim Morrison.

“Jim used to speak about freedom,” says Henderson’s email. “Today, Doors impede the freedom of a fan who has just tried to achieve a dream in their honor and in the honor of the others [sic] fans.”

Back here in Venice, Jim Morrison also belongs to this beachside town. It was where he lived during his years at UCLA and for a while after that, during the formation of the Doors, from 1963 to 1966. Morrison is the George Washington of Venice in terms of having “slept here.” Several apartment houses claim to have had Morrison as a tenant, including the Morrison Apartments on Westminster Avenue. Morrison was said to have hung out at the Venice West Café on Dudley Avenue. He also frequented Olivia’s Soul Food restaurant at Main Street and Ocean Park Boulevard in Santa Monica. While it is not known if he ever actually slept at Olivia’s when temporarily homeless, the place did inspire the song “Soul Kitchen.” (“I’d really like to stay here all night”).

Jim Morrison might have been just another one of the many young people who came to Venice during the early and mid-1960s, to live as cheaply as possible in the funky old buildings or even on the beach, to live freely and to create. One Morrison story had him becoming inspired to write a lyric while he was staying on the roof of a Venice building where he was able to look out at all the TV antennas on other rooftops. This lyric became “My Eyes Have Seen You,” on the *Strange Days* album.

But unlike many other Venice kids, Morrison was destined to “break on through.” The creation of the Doors began with a meeting of Morrison and Manzarek on the Venice beach, where Morrison modestly admitted that he was writing songs and



By Tim Rudnick

Last month, June 3, the Venice Oceanarium presented its 16th annual grunion party. Six to seven hundred hearty Venetians made their way to the beach at 10:30pm to watch these amazing fish come out of the waves to spawn. Young kids played in the surf and waited for the first of the grunion to appear. Older folks just watched. The night was moonless, but the darkness only increased the mystery of these fish.

No other fish in the world does what they do. Grunion hunting is a waiting game. At first only a few grunion appeared – two to four with each wave. The night was cool, so those not prepared for an ocean evening left early. Those who stayed began to see the numbers increase. Within an hour, 30 to 40 grunion started to “run” our shore. The excitement swelled as people began to observe the mating rituals. Many folks left at this point.

But the real reward came forty-five minutes later, just before midnight. At that time the shore became a virtual carpet of fish. Thousands and thousands of fish – everywhere glistening in the dark night. For those who waited, the night ended in a crescendo.

And how does the Venice Oceanarium know exactly when the grunion are going to run? How can they predict it six months ahead of time?

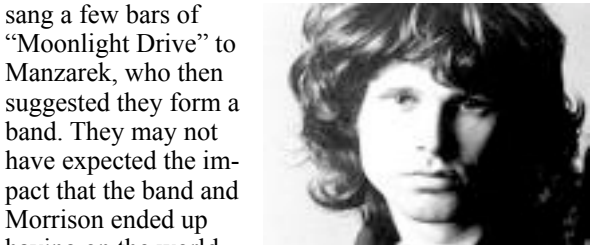
The grunion run four to six times a month from March to August. They run on the high tides of the month, usually after a full or new moon. Therefore, it is easy to predict with a simple tide calendar!

It is during these tides that the ocean climbs highest on the shore. This wet sand offers the perfect conditions for the female grunion to lay their eggs. The following tide, the next night, falls short of this wet sand where the eggs have been deposited. The fertilized eggs remain in their wet sandy womb for two weeks. When the water returns in the next high tide the eggs are ready to hatch and re-enter the ocean. Millions of young hatchlings fill the waters and stimulate the waiting schools of grunion to come onshore and continue the life cycle.

How do the first fish know just when to come ashore? Natural Selection! The fish that didn’t lay their eggs just at the high tides had their eggs washed away too early to be hatched and were eliminated from the gene pool.

The Oceanarium selects the dates for its parties very carefully. Usually the grunion are running at odd hours like 2:00 in the morning on a Tuesday or Thursday night. Obviously this is not a good time for a party. The Oceanarium has a party when the grunion run around 10:00-10:30 on a weekend. That usually happens only once or twice a year.

When the Oceanarium started having these grunion parties, hardly anyone knew the grunion ran in the



sang a few bars of “Moonlight Drive” to Manzarek, who then suggested they form a band. They may not have expected the impact that the band and Morrison ended up having on the world.

Venice proudly claims Jim Morrison as a “native son.” A giant Rip Cronk mural of Morrison, bare-chested, wearing his characteristic leather pants, adorns a Venice building and has become a Venice landmark in itself.

Any trolling of the Internet reveals that there is not a day that goes by without someone posting a comment on Jim Morrison-or a memory or a tribute or a description of a trip to Morrison-significant sites. There is probably not a day when one does not hear a Doors song coming out of someone’s car stereo as they drive by.

The impact of Jim Morrison on our world is immense. There is no telling what will happen with the current controversy over Lezard King in Paris but one thing is for sure-Venice can claim to be the original home town of the wandering soul of the poet-singer-lizard king.

(If you want to sound off on the issue, call: Doors Manager: Pboxes Concert: 331 40 24 02 10; Concert Venue le Bataclan: 331 43 14 00 30). ☸

middle of the city, at Venice Beach. Since then, the Oceanarium has put the Venice grunion on the map. This is important and was the main reason why the Oceanarium chose to do these parties. By identifying the presence of grunion in Venice, the Oceanarium emphasizes the importance of having a dark and quiet beach at night. And it makes the argument to keep the lights of the developing beach-front dim on the shore.

The next grunion runs will take place July 3 11pm-1am and July 4 12-2am. After that they will run again July 16 10:30pm-12:30am and July 17 11pm-1am, but these last two days are late in the season and the grunion turnout is expected to be low. For more information visit the Oceanarium’s website at www.veniceoceanarium.org. ☸

Vera Davis Center Saved

—continued from page 1

According to Ms. Weiss’ letter, the “tenant agency staff” will have to assume the expense and logistics for continuing this service. Also, Court-ordered Community Service workers will no longer be available for the center due to the lack of on-site supervision.

In a recent telephone interview, Ms. Weiss was asked about the status of the Prop K funds, and the Bureau of Engineering’s plans for the VDC. She said that the Prop K funds, \$100,000 for FY2011-12, and \$400,000 for subsequent years were allocated and will be available when needed.

For the next year, all the current tenants and programs will continue to operate as usual; however, tenants will need to relocate while the improvements are carried out. A portion of the \$100,000 from Prop K will be used to help tenants in that effort.

When asked about the VDC’s status as an L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument, and the attendant laws concerning changes to the structure, Ms. Weiss advised that the improvements under consideration by the BOE were things like expanding restroom facilities to make them ADA compliant, and replacing old plumbing in the Spanish Colonial Revival-style edifice that was built in 1930. The structure and appearance of the building would be unaltered.

Greta Cobar and Jim Smith also contributed to this article. ☸

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HAL'S ON ABBOT KINNEY

By CJ Gronner

I've spent a lot of time at Hal's over the years ... and so has most everyone else who has spent any decent amount of time in Venice. I remember when it was pretty much the only place to go on Abbot Kinney - and it being kind of scary to get to. Well, those times have clearly changed, but Hal's hasn't. It's still the go to place for good food, good people, stiff drinks and a nice dose of Venice history.

I sat down recently to hear all about it with the holy trinity of Hal's: Donald & Linda Novack, the owners and heads of the Hal's family (and together 40 years!), and Hal Frederick, their partner, the namesake and host of all the good times. With Hal's going on 25 years old this year, you can imagine the abundance of stories that have gone down within those walls.

Hal's used to be a restaurant called The Merchant of Venice, an eatery/antique store where you could buy the chair you were sitting down to eat on. Donald (an ex-New Yorker) and Linda (born and raised in LA, her Mom went to Venice High) were/are in the real estate biz, and had The Merchant of Venice as a listing. That turned into a fraction of ownership, which became full ownership when the original guy shirked his bills and left Donald on the hook for a big chunk of money. Donald and Linda knew nothing about the restaurant business at the time, but had no choice but to make it work. And so they have. They recruited Hal from the old West Beach Cafe, and he has been welcoming Venice and Friends ever since. The place works because of the three of them, all playing different and crucial roles.

From the first week of business when Linda had to step over a dead body to get in the door, to last week when Sean Penn was having lunch unassumingly, obviously a lot has changed over the years. What hasn't changed is the sense of community, and the warm feeling of neighborhood whenever you walk in the door. Hal lived above the LA Louver gallery back in the day, and got a good art education as a result, as well as long-lasting friendships with the local artists who can now be seen in museums all over the world - and right there in Hal's. A big Ed Moses on the west wall. Joni Mitchell. Larry Bell. Judy Stabile. Laddie John Dill. Many more, ever changing. And they all like to hang out there, all the time.

Donald and Linda Novack with Hal Frederick (in front of painting of Hal by Mykel Alatz.
Photo by Alan Shaffer



Part of the reason that it feels so homey is that the faces stay the same. Hal's has employees (96 between there and Casa Linda!) who stay. They are part of the family, and it shows. One guy was 19 when he started in the kitchen, and is now a grandfather. Francisco Morales worked at Hal's for years, and is now their partner in Casa Linda, two doors down. Manuel Mares is the Executive Chef, who began in 1989, serving up his delicious seasonal menus (best asparagus soup I've ever had the other day!) year in and year out. When I asked Mr. Mares what has kept him there so long, he simply smiled and said, "Them", looking fondly at Don and Linda. With everyone working so long together, what you get is consistency, something that is all too rare in restaurants these days. Which is why good old Hal's is such a mainstay in Venice.

So much so that they can tell tales about a couple that met at the bar, got married there, had their anniversaries there, and recently had their son's 21st birthday party there. Or the woman whose water broke in Hal's, and then had that child's Sweet 16 there. And

the Grandma who had her last 20 birthday parties there. Graduations, Memorials, Rehearsal dinners, Croquet Tournament rain-outs, Good times all. Generations of memories have been created here, all adding to the family feeling that only grows deeper through the years.

A big reason for that is that everyone is welcome, and everyone feels comfortable. Never mind your ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age, celebrity status, outfit ... you will blend in, and you will enjoy yourself. Hal sees to that ... a bon vivant, raconteur, stylish gent, he arrives to non-stop greetings four nights a week, especially the world-class jazz nights he started on Sundays and Mondays. This is a guy with good stories - like the time he was Maya Angelou's date for President Clinton's Inaugural Ball. And the time his childhood friend, Gregory Hines, showed up with Aretha Franklin, Sammy Davis Jr., The Nicholas Brothers and friends, and everyone danced around Hal's. And those were just the ones off the top of his head - there are 25 years worth of tales to tell!

"Venice has something ... it's got stuff. Good stuff." So said Donald about our community, speaking about the creativity and diversity that make up this part of the world. "If you get it, you get it, if you don't, you don't", is how Don put it, and he's right. The hippies, the fashionistas, the homeless, the travelers with guide books, all the people walking the street (walking in L.A.!!), enjoying the beach air, everyone makes up the whole. And the ones who stay and contribute to the town, are the ones who get it.

Like the Hal's family. They contribute to the Art Walk, the Garden Tour, local schools and churches, SPARC, they're trying to help out the Vera Davis Center now ... they are INVOLVED. Which speaks to why they've lasted so long in a business that as Linda said, they knew "Zero" about at the beginning. They care, so we care. They want us to do well, so we want them to do well. It's a really good model for life in general, and one that we would all do well to emulate.

Hal came from New York to Venice ("the best temperate weather in the world") because he was an actor, on stage and screen. As they just shot some scenes for *Californication* at Hal's, I asked Hal if he missed that actor life. He smiled and said, "No. There's a curtain up here every night."

Hal's family ... take your bows! Bravo, and may there be encore upon encore for years to come. ☺

Coping with Shootings and Complexities in Modern Life

By DeDe Audet

How do events like shootings in Venice relate to the strange migrations of jellyfish or uterine cells in endometriosis? Linear analysis of cause leading to effect does not explain it all. That's why police investigating shootings look for evidence before trying to figure out causes. Whenever someone says "I don't understand why X, Y, or Z happened," there is a very good chance that the causes are complex.

Some of us are studying the nonlinear world of complexity. Since most of our schooling is linear, it is not easy to understand how a given cause does not always produce the same effect.

As John Davis points out in the June issue of The Beachhead, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission - an organization supposedly committed to environmental preservation - seems to be bent on destroying an environment already in place in order to make work for friends.

A few economists foretold that leveraging and home mortgage securities would cause a huge market drop. Nobody knew when, so investors kept buying the golden eggs, until it happened in 2008. In complexity theory it is called a tipping point. All of a sudden, everyone decided to back off.

No doubt you have wondered at flocks of birds in the sky wheeling and dipping in synchrony and how they all know when to turn, go up, go down. Why do people similarly like to gather together and move in the same way, from armies marching to calisthenics to flash mob dancing?

Consider how a rave occurs and you will have a clue: cell phones and texting. And what an opportunity the rave presents for big, bad persons to show off guns, make big noises, and send people to the hospital. Think how mysterious a rave or flash mob dancing would have seemed in the year 1011.

For many, many years the meteorologists have been making educated guesses about the weather. And they are getting better at it. But they are the first to admit they are not perfect. From satellites they can see circular systems arise in the Atlantic Ocean off of Africa. So what they do is "track" these systems and make educated guesses about where the system might strike. Likewise, where a tornado will hit and what it will destroy is anyone's guess.

People spend fortunes to know the future. Politicians line the pockets of pollsters. Fear of the unknown is the stuff of dreams and prophecy makes fortunes for fortunetellers.

Theories of complexity now lead us into new views of our weirdly wonderful world. These views do not limit the past, but certainly put a halt to the practice of assuming that tomorrow will be a repeat of yesterday. Humans have learned to adapt to tomorrows that do not resemble yesterday. But the increasing complexity of this world and the speed at which it is arriving is putting a strain on the human habit of survival.

Extrapolations and averages are what drive the old fashioned systems we depend on. Birdwatchers

count a few birds at one location and add that sighting to other sightings. From such information, ornithologists extrapolate how many of those kinds of birds may inhabit that range. They do not really know how many. They make an educated guess.

By averaging the sightings over a period of years, the ornithologist predicts how many of those birds can be expected next year. And there is the problem - what period of time is being averaged - ten years, 100, 1000? No one knows when a disaster will strike those birds, a new predator, an old disease, a forest fire that consumes the nesting area. So an educated guess is still just a guess.

It is considered useful to build mathematic models to figure what the risks of disaster are. What the modelers use, though, is the record of disasters in the past in order to predict the likelihood of that same disaster next year. There is a chance that a vehicle driver with a record of two fatal crashes within the past five years will repeat, regardless of whether the driver is responsible or not. However, they cannot predict when a smoker will throw a lighted cigarette out the window while driving through the forest. Or when sparks from a malfunctioning vehicle will light the dry tinder on a dirt road in the forest. Or which forest.

Currently, Californians see their mountains piled high with an overload of melting snow which is filling the reservoirs with water, perhaps flooding some areas. But water companies have been experiencing years of drought conditions and they have not planned for abundance. So people are being told to conserve water and that they will have to pay more for it. Welcome to complex systems.

Groups of us in Venice have been studying complexity theory and how it affects our lives, our jobs, and our homes. Climate change tells us we have to build more flexibility into the systems needed to sustain life and we understand we must adjust.

The challenge is to get these ideas across to everyone. A Canadian professor of English Literature popularized some of these ideas through his study of media. Marshall McLuhan said "We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future."

For more information, check out the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico, where renowned scientists and researchers come together to study complex adaptive systems. If you are interested in knowing more about complexity theory in Venice, let me know at coastcom@gmail.com. ☺

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1911 Was A Banner Year in Venice

City of Venice and Venice Union High School Both Created

By Jim Smith

Venice may have been founded in 1905, but it didn't become the City of Venice until May 29, 1911. On that day, the good citizens of Venice voted to change its name from Ocean Park City to Venice.

Abbot Kinney, the founder of Venice, had originally been one of the city fathers of Ocean Park, an independent community in the early days of the 20th century. He broke with his partners in 1903, and developed the south end of OP into what became known as Venice. But it was still officially Ocean Park, until a petition was circulated which culminated in the overwhelming vote to call it Venice.

In 1911, Venice was a booming community. New businesses and houses were going up everywhere. The Venice Daily Vanguard reported one summer day when 35,000 people came to the beach. Imagine!

There were restaurants, hotels, theaters, free outdoor concerts, the amusement pier and bars that, contrary to neighboring cities, stayed open on Sunday.

The paper reported the astounding sale of a large home on Rialto Avenue for \$6,000. Most houses went for much less.

Interested in renting? Here's a six-room cottage, fully furnished, including a piano, for \$25 a month.

Both houses are probably selling today for 100 to 200 times as much, even though they are 100 years older.

Venice needed a high school to save its teenagers a long commute to school. In short order, the Venice Union High School - a merger of the Ocean Park and Playa del Rey school districts (soon to be Venice and Playa del Rey), was created. It took over the old Bath House on the Lagoon where our Post Office is currently located.

By August, Venetians were voting on a petition from the Walgrove Avenue area and from Playa del Rey to be annexed by the new city. It passed overwhelmingly, and swelled the size of Venice from its small beginnings as Venice of America which clung to the beach. After 1911, our city went all the way to Imperial Highway.

Does Venice Have A Future?

Venice has a great history. Our small community has become known worldwide for creativity, invention and alternative living.

What will it be like in 2111?

If the danger of losing our uniqueness in the sea of Angelino mediocrity wasn't enough, we are at risk from global climate change as is the rest of the world, perhaps even more so.

Pacific storms combined with rising sea levels could rip up our beaches and flood Venice as it subsides and oceans rise.

Without cityhood, it is difficult to envision a sea wall being built in time to hold back the water.

We may have to contend with too much salt water, and not enough fresh water. Can we depend on the DWP for a steady supply of water if drought dries up the Southwest and Sierra Nevadas? Again, without cityhood can we expect a desalination plant to be built in Venice that would convert sea water to fresh water?

Rising waters may force us to return to the old days of using canals instead of streets. New housing construction may begin with long poles driven deep into the soil to keep our homes afloat.

The original Venice in the Adriatic understood that its well-being depended upon its marriage with the sea.

Likewise, as global climate change proceeds and food supplies become less abundant, we may find that our survival depends on Venice fisher folk harvesting fish, seaweed and algae.

Even if the world elites change course and take dramatic action to avert climate disaster, we're still stuck cheek and jowl next to a larger city with a different goal - maximizing profits. And there are billions in profits to be made by converting Venice into an upscale and sterile resort for the wealthy. It's only the tenacity of several generations of Venetians that has prevented it from happening already.

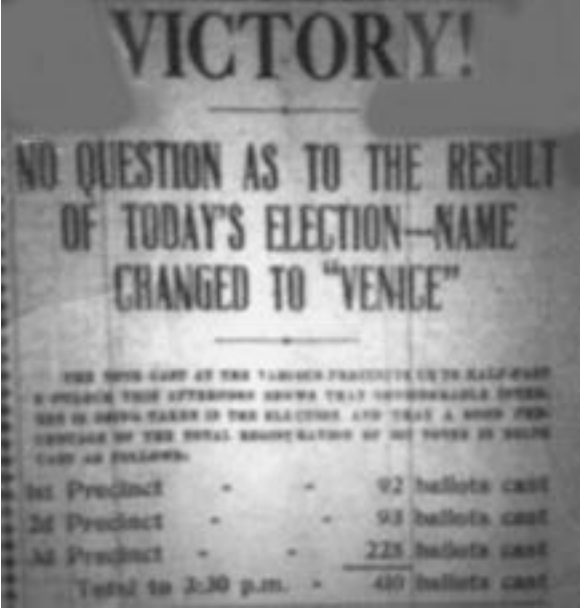
If Venice has a future it will include the poor, the middle class and the rich. There will be lots of Blacks, Latinos and whites of many backgrounds.

It will continue to be a place that honors its artists, its poets, its odd balls and dissidents. To keep Venice, with all its warts and scars, we all have to become dissidents to the dominant culture that otherwise will suck us into a shallow, zombie-like, consumerist lifestyle. ☺



Above: Vanguard ad urges vote for name change to Venice.

Below: Name changed to Venice, May 29, 1911. Apparently, there was no need to wait for the vote tally to declare victory. —Venice Vanguard



How Can Venice Be Preserved?

There are currently 24 historical districts in Los Angeles (HPOZs). There is no reason why Venice should not be the 25th.

A Venice historical district can be proposed to the City Council by our Councilmember, Bill Rosendahl.

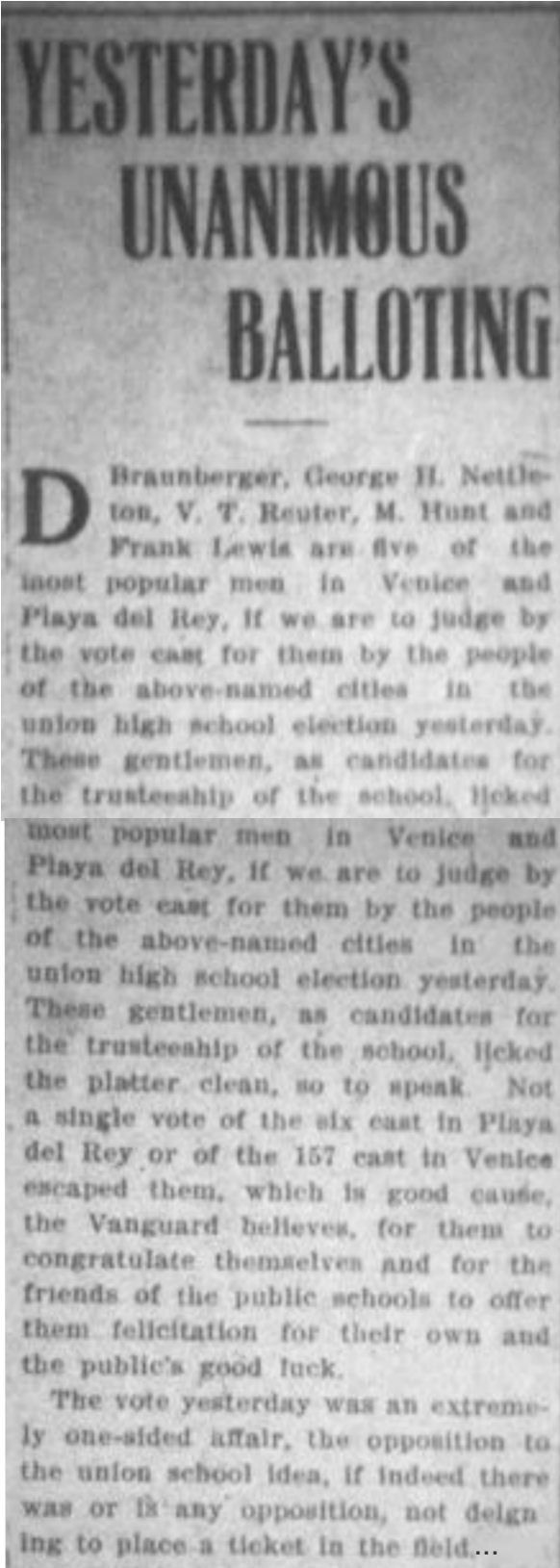
At the least it should include the walk streets, canals, old canal district, Abbot Kinney Blvd., Ocean Front Walk and most or all of Venice west of Lincoln.

See "Neighborhood Initiatives" at laconservancy.org and zimas.lacity.org for more information.

Let's preserve Venice for future generations.

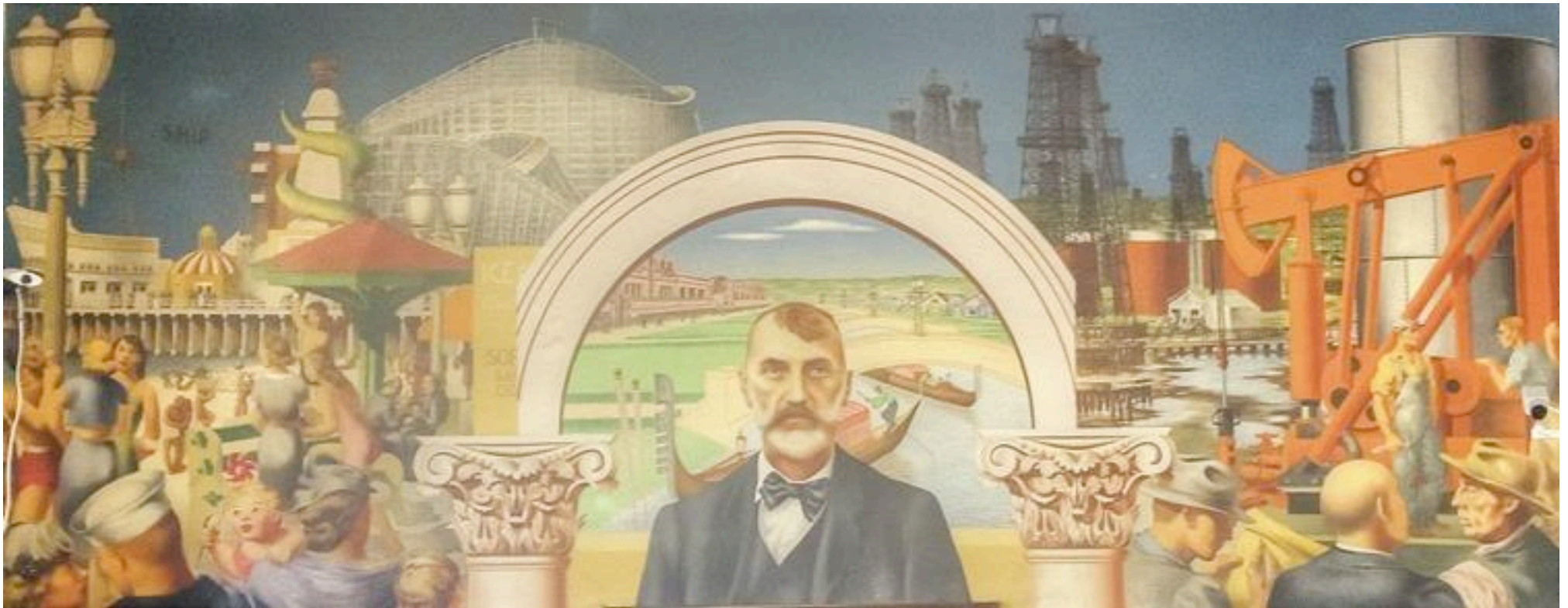
—Jim Smith ☺

First School Board Election from the Venice Daily Vanguard, June 10, 1911



The City of Venice (in green) as it existed until taken over by Los Angeles in 1925. It stretched from the Santa Monica border to Imperial Highway, and included Playa del Rey. Venice High was inside the city limits. The Marina channel did not exist. There was a bridge over Ballona Creek which enabled cars and Pacific Electric trains (Red Cars) to continue down the beach. From the Los Angeles City Archives. Modified for clarity by the author.

The once and future City of Venice



Save The Venice Post Office

✦ Email Janice Hahn. She will likely win the runoff election, July 12, for Congress. Send an email to Elaine@JaniceHahn.com.

✦ Ask her to take action now to ask the Postal Service to delay a decision on selling the historic Venice Post Office until she takes office. Ask her to continue Jane Harman's ban on the sale of any post offices in CD-36.

✦ Contact your other elected federal, state and city officials including:

L.A. City Councilmember Bill Rosendahl (213-473-7011 and bill.rosendahl@lacity.org),

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (202-224-3553 and boxer.senate.gov/en/contact),

U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein (202-224-3841 and <http://bit.ly/iOd7qi>),

Assemblymember Betsy Butler (310-615-3515 and Assemblymember.Butler@assembly.ca.gov),

State Senator Ted Lieu (310-318-6994 and senator.lieu@sen.ca.gov)

Ask for their help in saving our Post Office.

Interview with Edward Biberman, Painter of the Post Office Mural

Conducted by Betty Hoag
At Edward Biberman's home in Hollywood, April 15, 1964

BETTY HOAG: Mr. Biberman, you were directly connected with the Federal Art Projects work. I know that you did three murals for the Treasury Department: one in Venice in 1941; two of them in the Los Angeles Federal Post Office Building in 1937 and 1940. Are those the correct dates?

EDWARD BIBERMAN: Yes, the dates are approximately correct. The murals in the Los Angeles Post Office were 1937 and 1940. There were two separate murals. The ceiling, however, was the last of the three commissions and was actually not done until 1940 or '41. Only the side wall was commissioned in 1937. And the Venice Post Office mural was completed either in 1940 or 1941—I'm not quite certain what the signing date on it was. Let me repeat, they were all done for the Section of Fine Arts, an agency, I believe, under the Treasury Department. And they were direct commissions.

HOAG: Now before we go on I think it might be a good idea to review your life rather briefly.

BIBERMAN: I grew up in Philadelphia as a member of a mercantile family and received my university degree from the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, from which I graduated at the tender age of nineteen. I spent three years, from 1926 to 1929, in Europe—mostly in Paris.

HOAG: Had you been interested in mural painting, in Paris?

BIBERMAN: Only in theory. I was interested in mural painting and I entered my first actual competition for a mural for some industrial firm—I don't remember its name. The solution at which I arrived was one that received a great deal of attention when

the sketches were exhibited. I didn't get the job, but I got much publicity from it. More and more then, I became interested in the whole idea of mural painting. All of us at that period were terribly excited by the great Mexican mural movement.

I didn't go to Mexico at that time, but I was a very devoted and partisan follower of the work of Siqueiros, Rivera, Orozco and Charlot, and in theory I became an ardent muralist. I had never actually painted a mural.

Then the Federal programs were instituted. I never tried to enter the Federal Art Projects because I was still in the very fortunate position of coming from a family which was able to see to it that I wasn't in want during this very difficult period. Under those circumstances, of course, I felt that I could not indicate a desire to be on the Federal Projects, which were predicated on "relief," although actually I would dearly have loved to have been.

HOAG: Why?

BIBERMAN: Because it was a very stimulating atmosphere. This was the most exciting work that was being done in the country at the time. So, when the Section of Fine Arts competitions were publicized, shortly thereafter, I immediately took this challenge very seriously and started to design murals in open competition with other artists. This was not a WPA "relief" project. As a matter of fact, I had the very peculiar experience during this period of getting a great deal of recognition for work that was never completed to the point where I was asked to be the guest critic of mural painting at the Beaux-Arts Institute in New York. I had never actually executed a mural, although I had designed quite a few at that point.

HOAG: Interesting. Had you seen any of the Mexican muralists' work in New York? I believe Rivera had his controversial Rockefeller Center mural when you were there.

BIBERMAN: Yes. I had met Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, because from time to time all of them were in New York. I was a very good friend of Alma Reid, who owned the Delphic Studios and who was responsible for much of the work that Orozco was commissioned to do in the United States.

As a matter of fact, I spent an instructive weekend at Dartmouth with Orozco when he was painting his murals there. And I even collaborated: there is one line that I painted on the Orozco mural at Dartmouth! He was doing a kind of architectural decoration over a doorway at one point and—do you remember the gag about, "I can't even draw a straight line"? Orozco, as you know, had very bad eyes, only one arm and I don't remember whether it was because the reach was too great for him with his one good arm or whether he was just bored with drawing a straight line, but anyway—

HOAG: You were handy?

—continued on page 10



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Juan's Hats #3

Photo: Peggy Lee Kennedy

KING NEPTUNE RETURNS

By CJ Gronner

Ahhh, Summer, my favorite Season of them all ... and we actually got a little jump on it here in Venice, with the 1st (this Century) Neptune Parade and Festival on June 18th. The Neptune fun was bringing back the Venice tradition, that even instigator Danny Samakow (of [Danny's Deli](#) fame) was unsure of exactly when it began in the last century, but we're guessing around the 1920's.

King Neptune (played to the hilt this time by local actor and buff dude, David Frison), his Queen (Jessica, the Sugar Shack chanteuse) and his royal Mer-Court (Danny, James, Edizen, Poseidon Stand-Up Paddlers, Hula Hoopers, etc ...) would emerge from the crystal blue Pacific (NO June Gloom for the occasion!) to lead a parade across the sand and declare it officially SUMMER in Venice on land.

I went to the Breakwater at the given time (2:45) and saw no King Neptune, just a bunch of tourists, tanning and looking for shells. I thought I may have missed the whole deal, so headed back towards Danny's ... only to see the entire royal court emerging from the bar all riled up, blowing noise-makers, chanting and tossing out leis and Mardi Gras style



beads. (I later learned the delay was due to Jameson shots. So I totally approve.) I had my friend, Amy, down from Hollywood, so this was the perfect thing to have her go back and report on Venice. I love this place.

Here's a perfect example of why - the sheer delight on each face that we passed, a complete surprise, most just wondering what the heck was going on at first (as is often the case here), and all just loving it every second.

We traipsed across the sand, with the procession led by a "Venice" sign hanging from two sticks carried by Mer-Pages. We blew our horns, someone banged a drum, everyone we encountered got a necklace, and then Neptune - with great fanfare - made his proclamation that it was now officially Summer 2011! It was kind of exciting, if I'm honest. As I mentioned before, I love Summer. A lot.

"Hail The King! Hail Venice! Hail Summer! Hail Yes!!!"

So went the refrain everyone yelled as we headed back to the Boardwalk, led by the King & Queen under the Venice sign that by now had a chunk out of the "N", but no one minded. The procession was slow-going, since by now everyone visiting Venice Beach this day that had a camera was stopping their Highnesses to get a photo with them. Again, no one minded. Just more time to yell, feel the fun, and laugh at the sunbathing topless girls with headphones on being startled by beads landing on them as this crazy band of Venetians passed by.

Once on the Boardwalk, the throngs left the other acts going on around to come see what all this Neptune commotion was about. There the King again declared it Summer for the landlubbers who did not catch it at wave's edge. It was just quintessential Venice, through and through.



Photos by CJ Gronner

About that - I spoke to Danny afterward, as he collapsed into the relative calm (though a still-chanting Court kept it lively) of his restaurant saying,

"I feel like I just left a Fellini film!" Indeed, it had that tang. It was a great piece of guerilla theater, the surprise of it all being a big part of the charm. Danny is a great keeper of the Venice flame, and summed up his and his friends' feelings that bringing back some of the old time-y fun of Venice "keeps it true to the roots, while bringing it forward". As he said, "We want to stimulate the neighborhood to believe in itself." What a great sentiment for any-place in the whole world to embrace!

These kind of jamborees do two things big and importantly - they support local artists (again, our roots. Er, along with gangs, of course. Respect.) and it builds tourist trade (which then circles back to support local artists again. Awesome).

The Venice parade participants were a little sparse this first time, but their roar was mighty, and the seeds were planted, for sure. May they ever grow!!!

Hail The King! Hail Venice!! Hail Summer!!!

HAIL YES!!!! ☺



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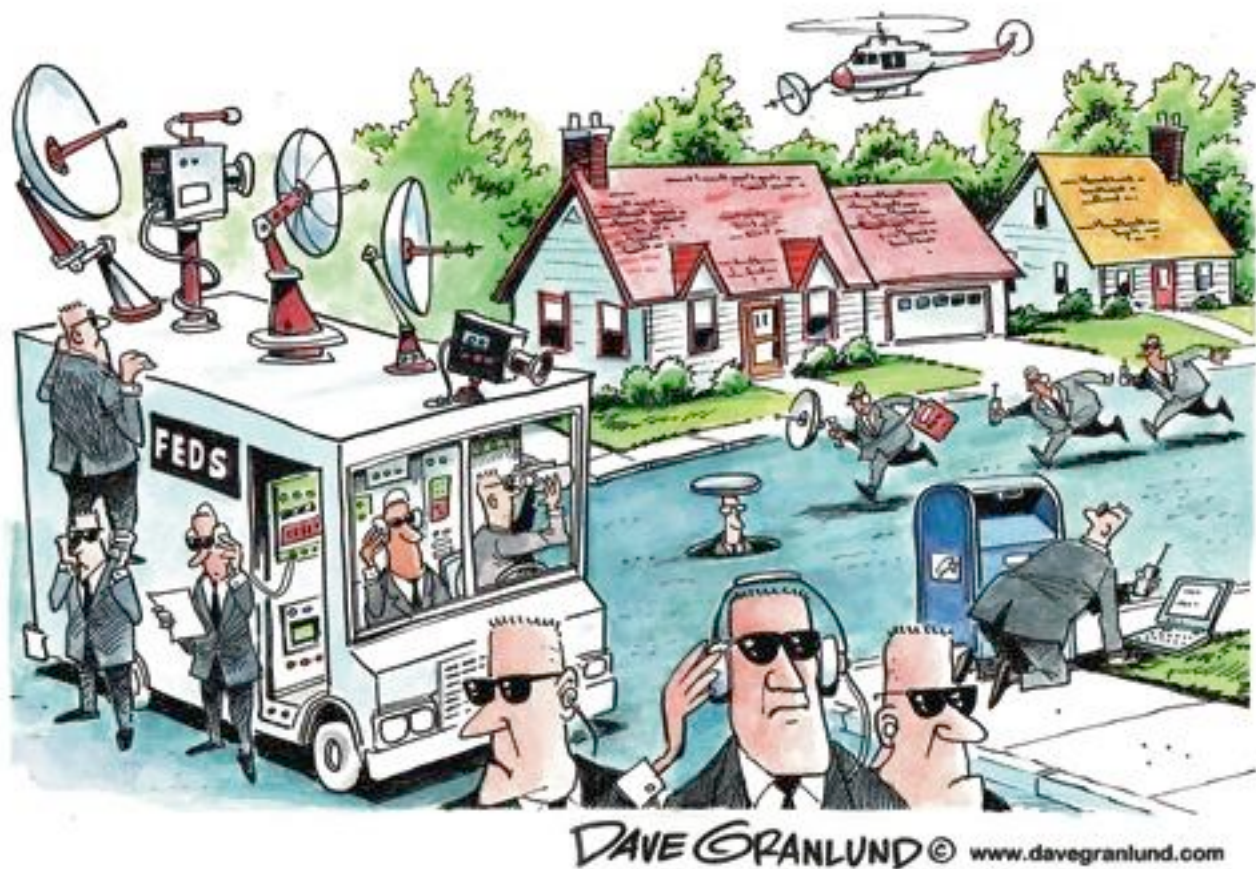
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Shh! The Patriot Act has been renewed...



Book Review: *Charles Brittin - West and South*

By Jim Smith

This book is an incredible photographic display of Venice in the 1950s and '60s, and of the Civil Rights Movement in Los Angeles and the South.

Brittin, who died last January 23 at age 83, left us with images of a Venice that no longer exists. His photos of the struggle for civil rights are both breathtaking and shocking.

Here's what Brittin says about Venice: "It felt like the end of the world then—Venice was about as far away from Los Angeles as you could get. It had the mood of a deserted colony, and there was a quality of remoteness to Venice that drew people whose chances were running out, or were just about to begin...Our apartments may have been small but there was a tremendous sense of space when you stepped outside...There were no confines, it was private, and you seldom saw any police."

One of Brittin's most famous photos is of the Venice West Coffee House when it was shut down by the LAPD for allowing poetry to be recited without a license. The photo has been published previously in the Beachhead.

Brittin must have taken hundreds, if not thousands of photos of Venice, and although there are 215 prints in the book, many of the Venice photos are not necessarily included. We are now dependent on the good will of the Getty Museum, which owns the Brittin archives, if we are ever to view these.

In any case, almost any Venetian would love this book. Fortunately, it can be purchased at Firefly at 1409 Abbot Kinney Blvd and Small World Books at 1407 Ocean Front Walk. ☺



Artist Wallace, Shirley and Tosh Berman on Speedway, 1956



Four Nuns, 1955. Venice as the Middle East



Marlon Brando at a CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) demonstration protesting segregated housing at a newly built suburban tract, Los Angeles, 1964.



Ocean Park Pier, 1969



Venice 1950, photographed from Playa del Rey hill, looking north, before the Marina was built. The jetty near the middle of the photo is still there, at the end of the peninsula. In 1950, it was possible to drive or take the Red Car down the coast to Playa del Rey, which was once part of the city of Venice. Jefferson Blvd. is in the foreground, with a Grand Canal bridge and Venice oil wells on the right.

On Returning to Venice

By Stuart Z. Perkoff

time is confused on the streets of my city
returning, it is now & always as i walk
thru footsteps of memory

fog limits vision, & my eyes turn
inward, where birds fly the feet
over paths of intricate memories

ghosts over my shoulder do not push or press
rather, their eyelessness peers to pierce
the veiled images of the future, or
the flowers ballooning from the clouds of mist

2.

all is not voice
or vision. real walls
separate the rooms
within which movements
are limited by space. & the bodies
within it

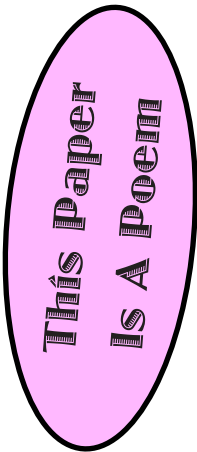
what endless histories
walk each separate flesh
each mind touching
its own
chronology
which goes beyond, encompasses
boundaries & isolations
within rigidity
the flow of continuity

3.

o ghosts
o my past
the face i wear

o my city
my flesh
the space given

yr voices in my ears
yr tears in my eyes
hands touching
songs ringing
from room to room
in the houses of my mind



On the Boulevard

I see him
Limping back and forth along the traffic island at an
intersection on Venice Boulevard.
Smiling at the cars waiting for the light,
Waving with one hand, the other held out.
He is deeply tanned about fifty, his cloths ragged and
filthy.
I cross over with the red light handing him my change.
Better than nothing.

–Malcolm H. Ball

Venice West

Do you remember?
the chess game in each reeling bar
on an oceanfront walk through surreal night
when the “gas house” was aflame
with ideas and smoke
from weak home-grown dope
and poetry was chanted
to the off-beat wail of a tenor sax
in the beat coffee-house “venice west”
how you would call a party in your tumbling pad
haunted by psychedelic doges
of the grand canal & tributaries to a fix
and sing and party til next week’s dawn
cause neighbors never gave a shit
and if they did they would just fall by
and have a drink or toke
to ease their restive souls
or a bit of crystal to wake up
how when properly lit some would fashion a raft
from the front door to the pad
that was always open
and drunkenly float on this swamping craft
whimsical gondoliers
singing off-key grand opera arias
polling up and down the slimy waterways
where the cops rarely came
for at least “it” was contained
they figured
they had “it” pent up
in a place where the main stream didn’t flow
the infamous canals
where bikers dopers poets drunks
and other misfits maintained
when venice was still
a restless slum-by-the-sea
no shit do you remember?

–Don Johns reprinted from the March 1987 Beachhead

Make me your lover

I will be most beautiful
built on each sequence fluently
watch me blossom between your weeds
nourish, cherish, keep me close
I will never wilt
give me passion
embrace me with words
And I will be the last rose in the desert of your life

–Jasper Schubert

23:32 Tuesday, June 21, 2011, Behind the Talking
Stick..... **A solstice has occurred**, the spring gives way
To glorious summer in a single day. A solstice has ar-
rived on fiery wings. A nightengale, far in the distance,
sings. Concentric circles turn, change of the guard.
Without discerning, noticing is hard. Eventual, inevita-
ble, turn, And light this midnight candle, let it burn. A
solstice has come forth to strike a chord. Millenia have
passed, unspoken word. The shortest night gives rise to
other things. The nights so slowly elongate, it brings
December twenty-first, near Christmas Day, The oppo-
site, a hemisphere away.....rogerhouston

Venice you bleed,
and your blood will not clot.
Your vital juices ooze
under the yellow caterpillar blade.
And I can not stop them.

The stormy husky brawling city of big
shoulders
is come to cart away your corpse.
They wait but for your heart to die,
your flame to go black,
And I cannot stop them.

With contracts and proposals they ploy
your evisceration.
When development has done with your soul
we will not need autopsy to ascertain
your cause of death.
The cause is plain as the smashed glass
and fractured rafters of a wrecked out bungalow.
As clear cut as the mighty cedar they doze up
by the root.
And why can I not stop them?

Philip Chamberlin
reprinted from the March 1977 Beachhead

Two Lives Lost

For Salvador “Junior” Diaz, age 18
Allan Mateo, age 19

two lives lost at Penmar park –
two boys raised up by loving parents
cut down by another youth –
three lives lost, really
because the shooter is now a killer
and will end up in prison, if found
The parents of the slain boys
were anticipating graduation –
total horror, total chaos instead
in the tiny village of Venice
cries of sorrow and pain are heard again.
an altar is left on the bleachers
candles burning in the dark,
drinks and Gatorades left for the boys
flowers and rosaries all around.
prayers are our only consolation
children killed at our playground:
The obscenity of war come home to us.

–Mary Getlein



Memorial Photo by Iliana Winston

Somewhere

By Jim Smith

Somewhere in this wide universe
There is a Venice
where Abbot Kinney’s son
is known as Thornton the Great
for saving the canals
for rebuffing the L.A. mob
for using the oil revenue
to build stately little bungalows
for one and all.

for teaching Venetians
how to keep their city

for endowing the arts and letters
for inspiring the entire world.

Cool, Smooth, Nocturnal
& Universal

By Hal Bogotch

It starts with low notes
barely a rumble
a melody flickers in
what’s being played
is more
than what’s on the page

it’s the clink
of champagne glasses
it’s horseshoes
clipping on cobblestone streets
it’s a tinny tiny bronze hammer
chiming the hour in the park

it’s the dim roar
of skywriters
pumping a pair of white heart clouds
it’s the arcing spray
from a broken hydrant
on a noon hot august night

it’s the twirl of unwinding
a bandage after a baton
busted a post-bop blower’s top
it’s miles away from birds
and dizzy dreamers
it comes clean in the night

it’s nothing but
nothing but jazz.

Swami X

Our resident guru underwent a hip re-
placement operation in May and is
convalescing.

Well-wishers may send cards or letters
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Interview with Edward Biberman, Post Office Muralist

—continued from page 6

BIBERMAN: -he handed me his brushes and he said, “Biberman, would you mind making that line for me?” I said, “I’d be delighted to make that line for you.” So that I can claim collaboration on the Dartmouth murals with Orozco. But the fact is that I, as I say, did meet all of the “big three.”

I happened to be in Radio City watching Rivera work the night before his murals were destroyed-just one of those strange coincidences. He used to hold court. He was a great showman and he loved to paint with an audience. And one night I had decided-just by chance-to go to the foyer where he was painting this large fresco. I watched him work for a couple of hours, then it got late, I was tired and went home. I found out the next day that at some ungodly wee small a.m. hour the mural was covered and either destroyed then, or subsequently.

But the point is that all of us in the East at that time were very excited by the phenomenon of a great Mexican mural movement and were delighted when our own government instituted, both through the WPA projects and the Section of Fine Arts, something that we felt represented a counterpart to what was being done in Mexico.

HOAG: They were the direct result of the work that you had done there? [in New York]. You came here in 1936, didn’t you?

BIBERMAN: I’ve been here ever since. That’s a much longer story of my life than I had planned telling you; but anyway, that’s how I became a Californian.

HOAG: That’s interesting. And in Venice, California, the Post Office mural you painted is done in oil on canvas?

BIBERMAN: Yes, it’s oil wax emulsion-technically, oil was emulsion on canvas. For this mural I was given the commission and asked to submit a sketch. So I read all I could about California’s Venice and it is a fabulous story which I hadn’t known before. The story of the founding of Venice is quite unbelievable. It would take much too long now to go into it in detail.

When Lion Feuchtwanger was still living I was at a dinner party with him one night. I don’t know how it happened, but I began to tell him the story of the Founding of Venice and he was so fascinated by it that he expressed the desire to write a novel about this strange place.

But to capsule briefly the intriguing quality-I found first of all that the concept of a Venice in California was the brainchild of Abbot Kinney, the scion of a very wealthy tobacco family, who decided that he wanted to build the great cultural metropolis of the United States in this particular area.

Having had his schooling in Europe, and as a young man becoming enamored of Venice, Italy, he decided that he would also call his dream city “Venice.” He imported architects and engineers from Europe. For the city’s opening he actually had gondolas and gondoliers imported from Venice and there was a performance of Sarah Bernhardt playing I don’t remember what. Hers was, of course, the greatest name in the international theatre world at that time.

He also had the finest symphony orchestra of the day as the resident music component of this whole concept. And the many lovely bridges and canals were in use. He wanted this new Venice to be a place of culture and the enjoyment of things beautiful. Well, a great deal which was unforeseen happened, and in a few years the entire venture, for reasons which are very complex, did not turn out as he had envisaged.

HOAG: Was this mainly because of oil being discovered in the area?

BIBERMAN: No, that came later. When oil was discovered the city had already begun to take on a

completely different character. The cultural orientation had been a financial failure so things went from one extreme to the other. Venice began to take on the quality of an amusement park. Very quickly the great dream of Abbot Kinney turned into, a) an oil field, and b) a honky-tonk amusement park. Of course from the painter’s point of view all of this is a wonderful bit of material to use.

So, my mural is designed around the man, a large portrait of Abbot Kinney, which I painted from photographs that I obtained from surviving members of his family who still live in that area. They furnished me with the photographs, described the quality of his skin and the color of his hair, his eyes, and so forth.

I painted the over-life-size portrait of him against a background of his vision of what Venice would be, framed in an arch with the great Corinthian columns which were used in the decorations there. From the dream the design goes on to actuality: on the one side the oil wells, on the other side the amusement park.

This is factually the story of Venice. A fascinating story. I sent the sketch to Washington expecting to be answered with a letter replete with expletives and four letter words. To my great amazement I got an answer saying they were crazy about the mural, to please proceed with it.

There was only one thing that I was asked to do: in one place where I had depicted the amusement park with all the signs, billboards, and so forth, I had shown what was recognizably the lettering used in advertising Coca Cola. I was told that I could not do this because one could not advertise in a government building: So I agreed to strike out the Cocoa Cola strip and substitute some amorphous or non-existent piece of advertising, which from my point of view carried the same idea.

HOAG: It’s a delightful mural. I think you must enjoy knowing that when I was standing looking at it some old lady came up to me and watched me for a while, then said, “Do you know what this building used to be?” I said, “I beg your pardon?” And she said, “Well, I was raised here and when I was a little girl this building where the Post Office is now was the boathouse. This is where we used to come to get the boats.” I said, “Were they gondolas?” She said, “No, I don’t remember ever seeing any real gondolas, but we all had our own boats down here.”

BIBERMAN: For goodness sake. Well, that is fascinating. This I didn’t know.

HOAG: She lives on one of the canals.

BIBERMAN: But whether the lady remembers it or not, there were gondolas and there were gondoliers imported from Venice. That is historic fact. There are many fabulous and fantastic stories about the whole thing, but it would take too long to talk about now. Some day the story of Venice is going to be written and when it is, it will be unbelievable. Everything about the place is something which one would imagine to have been created from a figment of some very rosy imagination. But it happens to be fact. The way the land was acquired is in itself quite a tale.

HOAG: Your portrait of Abbot Kinney is very beautiful. You certainly have that dreamy quality and a certain wistfulness with it, too.

BIBERMAN: Well, he was no longer living at that time. As I said, I had to rely on the photographs which members of his family gave me, and their description of his qualities as a man, and his coloration. I don’t know whether it looks like him or not, since I never knew the man, but I tried to stay as close to the documentary evidence which was supplied me as I could. Incidentally, I enjoyed painting that mural enormously. I found it a very exciting project. As I say, it’s a painter’s dream to run into that kind of rich material, which also happens to be true.

HOAG: It’s very colorful and very beautiful. The Post Office was recently repainted almost a creamy



Self-Portrait

white. I imagine it was originally a vivid color, but the white is a good background for the mural.

BIBERMAN: I haven’t seen it in years.

HOAG: It looks very fresh and well-preserved.

BIBERMAN: Periodically I go down to look at the condition of my three murals because, by now, they are all pretty old, but I haven’t been to Venice in some little time. The next time I’m at the beach I shall go by and have a look at it.

HOAG: I’m glad you told it to us. I’d like to talk a little more about your opinion of the contribution to the art of California made by work done under the Federal Art Projects, or any of the Federal art work of this period-whether you felt that it helped it or retarded it. For instance, perhaps some of the younger artists were influenced by men like you who were expert painters at the time. Do you feel this? Did you see any place where it was beneficial to them?

BIBERMAN: Well, of course I have a very partisan attitude to this whole matter. I am unequivocally in favor of it. I think it was one of the brightest spots in the history of American art, and I hope that we will see a revival of a government program. I fervently hope it will not be necessitated by another depression, which of course is what started the WPA project. That was a relief measure primarily, not a cultural measure. But irrespective of what brought it into being, and irrespective of the arguments against any government art program, and I think I’m familiar with all of the “anti” arguments, I find that this was an enormously productive period in American art. I think it actually brought into being and furthered the careers of many painters. The names of these artists are legion.

HOAG: There seems a little confusion in my mind. Often the people who worked on these projects criticized the existing social situation, which was the one feeding them and helping them to get through this period. That was always very hard for me to understand.

BIBERMAN: Yes, but I suppose that this was also a very real part of the quality of the period. This was a period of great social dislocation, so I think that it is necessary to understand the fact that naturally this quality of dislocation often was reflected in the work being done by some artists.

Trying to place the onus on some particular persons is not the important thing. At least I don’t think it’s what we’re discussing at the moment. And the question as to whether there was, or was not, gratitude on the part of the recipients of the very modest-what was it?-\$90 a month which was paid is open to question on both sides, I suppose. But the thing that so impressed and interested me at that time was the fact that it was possible for a painter to be a painter.

This is the paramount fact. I’m sure that I don’t have to tell you that today even the most successful painters-and there have been many surveys made in this field-either teach, or they write, or they lecture, or they do one or another group of things to make it possible for them to pursue their careers.

Excerpt of an oral history interview with Edward Biberman, 1964 Apr. 15, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Betty Hoag was part of the New Deal and the Arts project for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The entire interview may be read at <http://bit.ly/jasTTA>. Edward Biberman died in 1988. A film of his life, entitled “Brush With Life: The Art of Being Edward Biberman” (2005 by Jeff Kaufman) may be obtained at www.organa.com. ☞

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Community Events – day by day

Friday, July 1

- 7pm - A double **Venice poetry book launching**: “If the Dead Had Email” by Jim Smith and “Hour of the Moon” by Hillary Kaye. Refreshments/signed books available. Beyond Baroque. Free.



- 7pm – **First Friday**. Open shops, food wagons, lots of people. AKB. Free.

Monday, July 4

- **Independence Day**. Free.

Wednesday, July 6

- 11:30am-12pm - **Toddler Storytime**, new-borns to 3 years old. Venice Library. Free.

Thursday, July 7

- 6:30-7:30pm - **Bach to Blues and Beyond** Performance. Venice Library. Free.

Friday, July 8

- **6-10pm - Cave Gallery’s Opening Reception**: Kevin Peterson’s “Provenance” solo show. 1108 AKB. Free.
- 7:30pm - **Enjoy writing, music, and performance by two poets**. Beyond Baroque. \$7, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Saturday, July 9

- 1pm – **Reception and Reading; Janet Mitsui Brown’s illustrated children’s books**. Beyond Baroque. \$7, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.
- 6-10pm - **Grassroots Acoustica Fundraiser**. Talking Stick. Free.

Sunday, July 10

- 3-7pm - **Meet poet Ava Bird celebrating her new books**. Live music and spoken word with **Rex Butters, Kathy Leonardo, DJ Noj and Suzy Williams**. Katmandu Boutique. 1844 Lincoln Blvd. Vegan Food. Free.
- 5pm - **Hitched: African-American L.A. poetry readings**. Beyond Baroque. \$7, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Tuesday, July 12

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



- 7am-8pm - **VOTE in the Special General Election for Congressional District 36**.

Wednesday, July 13

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

Friday, July 15

- 7:30pm - **Enter a Zen sphere of jazz, beat, and avant garde**. Beyond Baroque. \$7, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Saturday, July 16

- 12-4pm. **5th Annual Venice BBQ and Picnic**. Oakwood Park, 767 California. Free.
- 7:30pm - **Suzy Williams singing “The Lit Show.”** Beyond Baroque. \$15.

Sunday, July 17

- 7-10pm - **It’s Bluestime, featuring Tom Gramlich & Mystic Miles**. Talking Stick. Free.

Tuesday July 19

- 7-9:30pm - **VNC Board Meeting**. Westminster School Auditorium.

Thursday, July 21

- 6pm - **Venice Art Crawl**. Find the maps online or go to OFW and Windward. Free.
- 6-8pm – **Opening Reception**. L.A. Louvre. 45 North Venice Blvd. Free.

Saturday, July 23

- 10am-6pm - **3rd Annual Summer Fest, Venice Beach: Exhibitors and Food vendors, 20 Bands**. 1800 Ocean Front Walk. Free.
- 9pm - **Ellyn Maybe’s Poetry Rodeo**: Open reading with Ellyn Maybe and Her Band. Beyond Baroque. \$8, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.

Sunday, July 24

- 10am-6pm - **3rd Annual Summer Fest, Venice Beach: Exhibitors and Food vendors, 20 Bands**. 1800 Ocean Front Walk. Free.
- 12-3pm - The G2 Gallery’s **Third Annual Pet Adoption for Animal Lovers**. G2 Gallery. Free.
- 7-10pm - Word Music Night. Talking Stick. \$10.

Friday, July 29

- 7:30pm - **Homeboy Industries Benefit reading**. Assists at-risk, ex-gang involved youth. Beyond Baroque. \$7, students, seniors, children \$5, members free.
- 7:30-10pm – **Subversive Cinema**. 212 Pier. Free.

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The Beachhead Calendar is a public non-profit service to the community of Venice. Our goal is to list free events within Venice. If you charge for your event, please consider taking out a \$25 or larger advertisement.

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Calendar By Karl Abrams

Location Guide

- Abbot Kinney Public Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd, 310-821-1769.
- Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. 310-822-3006.
- 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.

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.
- 6-10pm - **7 Dudley Cinema** - 3rd Mondays at Talking Stick. 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.



Thousands of Venetians participated in the parade, June 26, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Venice High School. The largest number of skateboarders ever assembled - topping the number in the Guinness Book of World Records - rolled their way to school.



Photo by
Barbara
Lonsdale



Three photos by rayraepix.com

The Venice High Centennial Parade



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On March 1, the Free Venice Beachhead featured this Tsunami art by Marina Valentina. The issue appeared ten days before the Japanese earthquake and Tsunami struck on March 11.