

This issue is dedicated to John Haag, 1930 - 2006

FREE VENICE

SINCE 1968

BEACHHEAD

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May 2006
ISSUE NO. 296

P.O. BOX 2, VENICE, CALIFORNIA 90294 • www.freevenice.org • Beachhead@freevenice.org • 396-0811 or 399-8685

John Haag

By Carol Fondiller

If I believed in ghosts or revenants or communicating with the dead, I would summon up John's spirit with candles, vodka, fine red wine, potato chips and some ultra spicy weed. Maybe I'll do that anyway leaving out the candles for safety's sake.



And John would sit there his pale skin just a whiter shade of pale. His hair to his shoulders, curled. John had the features of Alexander Hamilton or Thomas

Paine, sharply carved delicate features. They would not have looked out of place carved in marble and he would tell me what happened and I would not depend on my ego-centric memory. I met John after a raid on a poster shop in the late 60's. I was furious at the injustice and brutality of the raid. At that time, John, along with his wife Anna, was running the Venice West, a Coffee House in the real eighteenth century conception of a Coffee House, a space where poets and mere people came together and argued discussed and sat at tables over cups of coffee into the dawn.

I didn't know then, that these were the hours that John kept for most of the time I knew him.

John was an aristocrat and an anarchist.

He truly believed in Self-Government and self-determination. I'm at a stage in my life that when I mention Jeanne Craine, Tyrone Power, or Huey Newton, H. Rap Brown or Abbie Hoffman, I receive blank stares of who? Who was John Haag? Why do all these old people remember John Haag?

In a way John Haag might be characterized as the George Washington of Venice. Abbot Kinney developed and conceived Venice, Los Angeles colonized Venice. And John Haag fathered the concept of Free Venice—self-determination of community.

It was a time. In the late 60's to mid 70's you would have found me sitting on a bench on the Ocean Front Walk, yes there were amenities for people who just wanted to sit. Not shop pay or play for money or stardom, just places for people to SIT, to look at the people or the ocean, to rest....to re-create themselves—to recreate. You would have seen me truckin' down the 'Front

—continued on page 4



Living in two worlds – at L.A. City Hall, May 1, 2006 photo by Jim Smith

May Day, as it should be

May Day - the holiday that sprang from events in Chicago in 1886 - came roaring back to its native land this month as millions took off work and marched in cities around the country. What began as a commemoration of the struggle for the 8-hour day in Chicago has been adopted by nearly every country in the world, except the U.S.

This year, without so much as a "by your leave," millions of workers left their jobs and took part in festive marches in hundreds of U.S. cities. These were mainly immigrants bringing back an American tradition from across the border. There was no government sanction for a holiday, although the California Senate, to its credit, declared its support. This was a people's holiday, like the original May Day, born of struggle and protest.

The Minutemen - those defenders of Aryan purity - against the hordes of Brown people crossing the border - must have been hiding under their beds this day. They were pitifully outmatched, last summer, when they threatened to attack Venetian Judy Baca's monument, Danza Indigenas, in Baldwin Park. In a prelude to this year's massive marches and rallies in support of undocumented workers, thousands came out to defend the art and Latino culture.

The origin of this year's uprising was an effort in Congress to, at a stroke, declare millions of immigrants "felons," because they lacked government documentation. Hysteria against poor peasants and working people seeking jobs was whipped up by media personalities and some politicians. Few of these commentators point out that immigrants have been forced from their land and jobs by the invasion of U.S. corporations and

financial institutions that undercut local crops and products in favor of cheap imports.

Worst of all has been NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, which includes Mexico, Canada and the U.S. NAFTA has torn away protections for Mexican products that can't compete with the sheer might of U.S. corporations. Mexican corn cannot compete, so the farmers leave their land and head north. Mexican manufactured goods cannot compete, so the workers leave their land and head north.

NAFTA has opened to borders to investments, money and imports. In fact, everything can now travel freely over the border except people. Perhaps its time to add the free flow of people to NAFTA's integration of North America. Perhaps then, Mexicans could come to the U.S. to earn some money and return to their homes and villages instead of being forced to avoid the ordeal of the border.

So far, in Venice, the "Haters" have focused their wrath on defenseless homeless people, including those who live in their cars and campers. Will they also turn their hate to the many Oaxacans and other immigrants who have settled in Venice, or will they keep their attention on their fellow countrymen and women who have fallen on hard times? In any case, the new "visibility" of immigrants from Latin America and Asia has pointed out that the vast income gap between rich and poor in this country is also a worldwide phenomenon, and as long as this great gap continues no laws are likely to stem the tide of migrations.

-Jim Smith



More Dear John letters on pages 4,5,8,9

CASUALTIES IN IRAQ
U.S. 2,405 Dead - 78 this month
U.S. Wounded 17,648 - 379 this month
Iraqi Dead: 34,711 - 38,861
This month: 938 - 966
(some sources say 100,000+ Iraqi dead)
Source: antiwar.com



The collective staff of the

BEACHHEAD COLLECTIVE:

Karl Abrams, John Davis, C.V. Beck, Carol Fondiller, Don Geagan, Erin Grayson, Yolanda Miranda, Jim Smith, Erica Snowlake, Alice Stek, Suzanne Thompson

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 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. If return of material is desired, a stamped self-addressed envelope is required. No payment is made for material used.

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

Web: <www.freevenice.org>

Email: <Beachhead@freevenice.org>

Our Mission Statement

Oh Holy Shit
The Thought Police are rising
It is the Time
for the Beachhead's rebirth
Now is the Time to get your thoughts together
If you care whether
you have a thought of any worth.
Thoughts left of Center
Homeowner or Renter
Put your Head where your Pen* is
Send it to us use your wits
and if we like it
We'll print or plagiarize it
or tear it into
teeny tiny
bits

— by the Slumgoddess

*Pen: Antique Term for Word Processor or Computer

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Hearing on Affordable Housing

Dear Beachhead,
The 11th District is facing an epidemic that threatens our neighborhoods and our quality of life. With increasing frequency, developers are converting rental units into high-priced condos, throwing renters out of their apartments and worsening the affordable housing crisis.

It is time to address this problem.

I am very excited to report that, thanks to the leadership of Councilman Herb Wesson and Councilman Ed Reyes, the City is getting to act. This morning, they announced citywide hearings into the loss of rental and rent-controlled units to condo conversions, demolitions and new for-sale units. The hearings will be joint meetings of the Planning and Land Use Committee, chaired by Councilman Reyes, and the Housing Committee, chaired by Councilman Wesson.

Please save the date to attend a public hearing on this issue, right here in the 11th District:

6 p.m. Monday, May 22
Walgrove Elementary School, 1630 Walgrove Ave

I am extremely grateful to my colleagues for demonstrating leadership on this issue and welcome the fact that they will be meeting in our district, where the problem is particularly acute. A majority of our residents are renters and condo conversions are skyrocketing.

I will attend the hearing May 22, and I invite you to join me.

Regards,
Bill Rosendahl, Councilman, 11th District

Greatful former Hippie

Dear Beachhead,
Thank you for a wonderful neighborhood newspaper! Please list me as "Greatful former Hippie."
Thanks, Jesse Glazer

The following letter was partially printed in last month's issue. The Beachhead Collective regrets the error, and is reprinting the letter in full.

Ocean Front Walk Ordinance

Dear Beachhead,
In the February '06' issue you devoted a page to the ordinance prohibiting commercial vending on the Venice Beach Boardwalk. I noticed in the March issue no more was said about the vending. I was hoping for a large cry concerning the end of a long and successful tradition.

As a craftsman on the beach, every time I told a customer that the vending is closing down, I got the same response – a gasp, a question why and a remark such as "I can't believe it!" as if a good friend had died.

And so it is, Venice Beach has been a good friend to all the people from all over the world. The vending on the Venice Beach Boardwalk has not only provided interesting arts and crafts but conversations and teachings from all over the world.

Vending goes back in history to the time when the stranger was most important bringing the news and the seller was important giving the news.

Large new structures are going up or are in the planning for the Venice Beach Boardwalk. what a shame that the old can't be side by side with the new with many kinds of activities going on at once.

Annette Robinson

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for back issues of the Beachhead

Douglas Eisenstark salutes the Beachhead for its coverage of the Lincoln Place crisis.

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Rebuttal

Dear Beachhead,

On page five of the April issue of Free Venice Beachhead I saw a reprint of a police report on a murdered woman whose name was withheld. I also saw a poem to a murdered woman who was named Verika. It appeared to me at first that there were two murders in February, but the police reported that it is just rumor that there have been other murders in recent months in the (Venice and Santa Monica) area.

This means that the police don't know anything about the homeless man murdered in Santa Monica during the month of March.

By God's grace I had the questionable and inevitable fortune to have been at Ocean Park Community Center (OPCC) when the Santa Monica Coroner's Office arrived with photographs of the murdered man, looking for paperwork on the man, according to those who overheard the conversation at the reception desk.

I spoke with one woman who said she is sorry she caught a look at the murder victim's face because it will now haunt her forever. She said his throat was slashed and he'd been shot in the face. That was all I could get out of her besides disgust. We were waiting in line for food.

The police obviously know nothing either about the man whom the Fire Department extinguished beside a dumpster on Speedway, also in March.

I know about it because a homeless man who'd seen the fire department put out the fire, also saw them discover it to be a dead body. A couple of homeless guys had to have something to talk about.

I find it hard to believe that the great LAPD doesn't know about these things. I'm more inclined to think they are taking the opportunity to dismiss rumors by implying that two friends talking in Venice, can't be taken seriously.

So here's another reason to discredit me further. I'm also a homeless man. You therefore couldn't take me seriously if I'm homeless.

The sad irony is that if anybody knows anything that can help the police it will undoubtedly be a homeless person who saw something they weren't supposed to see.

They, I believe, will not come forward because the police might become more concerned they are drunk or loaded or carrying drugs on them but maybe a good buzz is what it'd take to walk into the cop shop and spill your guts about a murder suspect so that in my opinion is why the cops won't get it. On the other hand, it's often difficult to believe someone who is drunk or otherwise 'wasted.'

The reports from homeless people to themselves on what they've eye witnessed and what they've seen in the media, weighed against what has failed to get into the media is what has them concerned.

The homeless on the beach are sleeping together in a big group by the Sidewalk Café and on the other end by Rose but the general consensus is that they are safer closer to the police substation because the police patrol there more and the businesses close later. Today's beach bums are more worried about some psycho sneaking up on them than they are of the police sneaking up on them.

-Sergio Trevino

Foiled by April Fools

Dear Beachhead,

Hello, friends of Venice, I'm an old resident of this great town and what a shame that John Haag has gone home to his other place, he will be missed! what with these fools (VVC) and this punk Ziegler we need dudes and gals like that like we need a hole in our head! lets wake up and kick some ass.

Man I know all about overnight camping, shit I used to live right on the beach and shoot dope. its not like that to-day I got my ass in to the 12 step recovery process and went to some meetings and now have a good life, I can have some pride in. I work in recovery in Burbank. You know it's all about showing up and helping others, even if you don't want to. Keep up the good work and make sure this paper gets out on time.

Peace & Freedom, Dewey

In Brief

GRVNC is no more as new bylaws get the nod from stakeholders

The local neighborhood council is not longer "Grass Roots," as many Venetians called it. The old Council was overturned on an exceedingly small vote: 217 in favor to 139 opposed.

With the passage of new bylaws, May 1, the official name has been changed to "Venice Neighborhood Council" (VNC).

Also eliminated were the seven district representative positions and absentee voting. Instead of 7 officers, 7 districts, and 7 at-large reps, there will now be 7 officers and 14 at-large reps.

The catch is that you will only be able to vote for one of the 14 at-large reps, and 7 officers. The effect of the change will likely be a majority of VNC Board members being elected with less than a hundred votes instead of hundreds, as in the past.

-Jim Smith

Stop the Freeway!

There will be a March in Protest to the New Planned Development - including the widening of Admiralty Way and the Extension of the 90 Freeway into the Marina and Venice (dumping traffic at Ocean Ave. and Washington Blvd.)

**10 AM Saturday, May 13
Burton Chace Park
Marina del Rey**

(corner of Admiralty Way at Mindanao)

Come Join in the March with your friends and neighbors to Stop the Freeway and massive development on our border!

Trees get planted

Approximately 100 neighbors and friends came out to participate in the planting of 25 beautiful trees in the Oakwood area of Venice on April 29. The 15 gallon, drought-tolerant trees were supplied by Treepeople and the City of Los Angeles DWP.

Councilman Rosendahl's Office, Disney, Venice 2000 and Phoenix House were major supporters of this beautification effort.

The community looks forward to future tree planting events.

-Imboyland



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venice, ca
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NO
• APPOINTMENT •
NEEDED

Lincoln Place Tent City Update

By C.V. Beck

We still "hang-in" at Tent City (corner of Frederick and California, Wednesdays and Saturdays, weather permitting)...on tenterhooks, in fact. We have been waiting for a fabulous, positive conclusion to the mediations, originally scheduled to conclude this past Friday. However, the mediations are not yet completed and will be going forward some more in May.

Our councilperson, Bill Rosendahl and his deputy, Mark Antonio Grant, stopped by April 22 to see us after being at a rally at Oakwood Recreation Center, where there were "a lot of angry people" who were upset at hate mail from an Oakwood resident about other Oakwood residents, which was sent to Police Chief Bratton, LAPD.

Bill and Mark brought us some water and shared peanuts with us and the "Alvins," our Tent City mascots. Bill said he was "hopeful" and I hope he is right. The squirrels are fine, fat and happy, greeting us enthusiastically, every day we are there. They have gotten used to us and we, to them. (If only the different groups in Venice could do the same...)

I ran into "Philly" (not his real name) outside St. Joseph's Thrift Store and asked how he was doing. He told me he'd been at Centinela

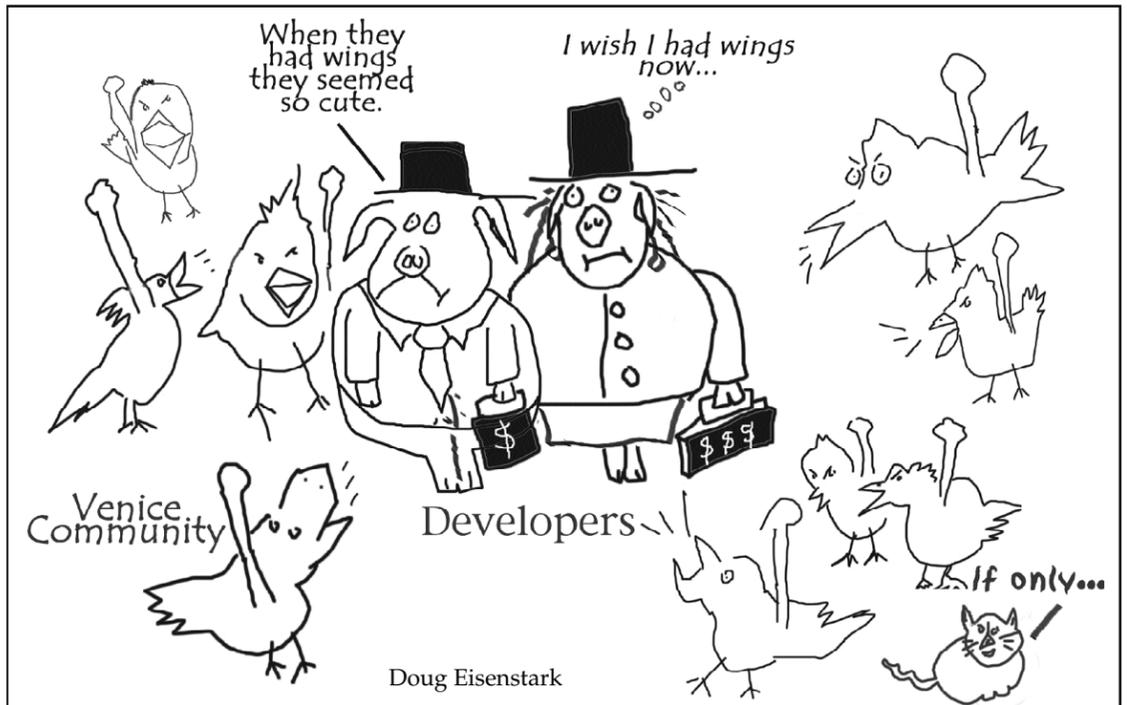
Freeman Regional Medical Center Marina Campus (the new, unpronounceable name for the old Daniel Freeman Hospital) where they had kept him in a room by the nurse's station for 4 days. "Philly" commented to me about the poor quality of care and that he had then left there, apparently against medical advice and returning to Brotman Hospital, where he felt care was better. His leg has now cleared up.

People continue to drop by, ask how we are doing, sit for a few and have some munchies, sign petitions and take away hand-outs. Some have said they "can't believe you are still here!"...

We did not have a Vigil April 30 as we were at the Lincoln Place Spring Fling II, presented by Erin Grayson and Dennis Wilson. A rough cut of

Erin's documentary about Lincoln Place, "Venice Lobotomy" was shown in the evening outside on one of the walls of the buildings. Mark Antonio Grant had stopped by on his way to a Lakers game and was given a token "Thank You" acknowledgement for Bill Rosendahl, signed by all the residents of Lincoln Place for their appreciation of all his work on our behalf.

The Vigils will continue at 1:30 pm this Sunday with a mystery guest. Why don't you stop by and see us?




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Dr. Benjamin Spock, "the baby doctor," when he ran for President in 1972, and his California campaign manager, John Haag.

John Haag photos and documents courtesy Arnold Springer/Venice Archive, CSULB

*Dear Friends,
Thanks to
everyone who par-
ticipated in this
memorial issue for
John Haag. Your
remembrances
have reminded all
of us how much
John meant to so
many people, and to
Venice.*

*Please watch
the Beachhead and
www.freevenice.org
for information on
a memorial gather-
ing.*

*-the Beachhead
Collective*

"The Bishop"

I first encountered John Haag at the Venice West Cafe in 1960 when I lived on Sunset Avenue. I liked the place and the literature in the window. However, I did not come to know John at that time. That only happened later, after reading his articles in the Beachhead, which were to my mind reasonable and lacking in the common vitriolic hyperbole of the day. My wife served with him on the original Venice Town Council where she so admired his dignified bearing, integrity, and leadership skills that she dubbed him "the bishop." He took the appellation as intended. She also admired him because in spite of being a "heavy hitter" he always listened to her—really listened. We also worked together on an early 4th of July parade, encompassing the entire community, instigated by John and largely a success through his efforts. To our regret, we saw him only rarely in recent years and we mourn his passing.

- Chuck Bloomquist

I was sorry to hear about John Haag.

Ben was surrounded by people in his campaign who supported him, and John was one. He could never have made it without him.

I know that Ben was proud of John and his contribution. Thanks for letting me know.

- Mary Morgan, Dr. Spock's widow

John Haag by Carol Fondiller – continued from page one

going to work or a meeting, a party. I would be idle on the 'Front, sitting on one of those benches with my friends. We would look at one another, as we sat and smoked that evil weed, tobacco, and looked at the people walking by, exchanging greetings and insults with our acquaintances, the sun shining a slight breeze ruffling the gauzy granny/Indian dresses of the women floating by, and we'd discuss politics—and then we'd stop and look at one another and say, "These ARE the good ol' days" and we'd clutch that moment of the blue ocean melting into the horizon of the cloudless blue sky, the gauzy floating women the epiphanies on those now vanished benches—we'd clutch that mini moment and remember every vivid hue and scent....We'd be at City Hall protesting the urban renewal—the Master Plan of Los Angeles—protesting the war in Vietnam. It was, as Todd Gitlin (another famous name from the past guaranteed to get a rise of "Who?" from those under 50) said, in a recent speech—the "sixties were a larkier time" than the 21st Century.

Now John, to my knowledge, for all of his care about the Ocean Front Walk, never spent what free time he had on the Ocean Front Walk or the beach. He would occasionally table the Ocean Front Walk and be threatened with arrest by the L.A.P.D. Sometimes he'd head a rally on O.F.W. I'll bet there are few people left on this earth, if any, who ever saw John lying on a blanket on the sand getting some rays in those pre-ozone hole days. What a wonderful time! All sun and cheap rent. Important causes combined with a gerbil's concept of unintended consequences. John's skin was pale translucent his features sharply carved—but I've talked about his looks.

I did not know what he did before he came to Venice. In those days, some came to divest themselves of what they were—to un-invent to uncoil. People never asked what you did or where you came from before you landed at the edge of the continent looking for the mirror of oneself. John came into my life when I began seeing pamphlets and posters, courtesy of the City of Los Angeles and the Venice Chamber of Commerce touting the virtues of the Master plan, lighting, street repairs, canal restoration—along with less crime. After witnessing several arrests by the Imported Notorious Metro Squad of the L.A. Police Dept., I went to a meeting held in a house on the Ocean Front Walk.

The place was jammed with all kinds colours and classes of people.

All sorts of people complained of being mistreated by the Police.

Then a man clad in black turtle neck and black jeans got this vociferous diverse crowd to focus on what was happening, and how to achieve fairness at the hand of he justice system.

I recognized this man as John Haag, proprietor of the Venice West, and organizer of a debate regarding censorship, the U.S. Post Office, D. H. Lawrence and Lawrence Ferlenghetti and the

right to shout FUCK in a crowded room. The previous phrase could not have been printed or shouted in the 50's—even if that room was the Venice West. The V.W. was always threatened with being shut down, because they had Poetry Readings and live performances were prohibited. At least that was the excuse given.

At future meetings of he group, we became a Committee—the Venice Survival Committee.

Then John Haag and others initiated the Peace and Freedom Party. An alternative to the two Parties: Tweedle dum and Tweedle dummer. John connected the dots between racism, poverty, powerlessness, anomie, war and crime—or rather in some mystical Socratean way enabled some of us to piece it out. He would ask why when someone would state accepted wisdom. What do you mean where the freeway will go through Venice—why should a freeway go through Venice at all, separating the then predominantly black working class middle class community of Oakwood from the Ocean Front Walk and the Canals?

He spoke up to City officials and bureaucrats as if they were people such as you and I. He was autocratic and haughty about the way things should be done, but he was thorough in finding out what were the things that needed to get done and reach consensus. We learned that the crack-down on crime and drugs—that is, rousting people who looked "suspicious," i.e., berets beards bells braids an illegal smile, arresting people, then dismissing the charges but costing the arrestee loss of wages and time, and grief. People were harassed because they spoke out against the collusion between speculators and various city agencies to get rid of low-income people whether they were pensioners who owned their little beach cottages or renters who rented one room from a low-income (yes they existed) home owner. The plan was, The Master Plan, was to make Venice a Miami Beach West.

One night after meetings of the Venice Survival Committee, the Free Venice Committee, and the Peace and Freedom Party, some of us stayed behind at the P&F headquarters on West Washington Boulevard, now known as Abbot Kinney Boulevard. We sat in the back room where John lived, and we, or rather John, who had been thinking about the lack of objective coverage in the press or on T.V.—remember, no e-mail or Internet Googles in the 60's—suggested we put out a paper sponsored by, at that time, the Peace and Freedom Party. A community paper a paper not owned by anyone, but a place where opinions and analysis and news not covered in the Establishment media could appear. A place where people who had no voice could find their Voice, and not only write their voice but have it read by people outside the group. The paper, named by John Haag, was called the Free Venice Beachhead.

There were arguments discussions fulmina-

tions and poems printed in that paper. They came from the community. And again an old cliché was retired. Yes, people had voices. John did not speak for the voiceless. The people had voices, the powers that be just didn't listen until John taught us how to yell. And God Damn! We had fun! Can I tell you the clever things John said? No, yuh hadda been there.

John had this core of common sense, that in the middle of every crazy wish or dream, he would say, why not?

Venice secede from Los Angeles? Why not? Well, that didn't happen, but we started the Venice Town Council immediately co-opted by Pat Russell, but taken back by us rip snortin' commie pinkos who had the audacity to claim that renters were part of the community, as were low-income people.

If we did not defeat the Master Plan for evacuating the poor, (it has reappeared, but in bits and pieces all over the City), we held it off for enough years so that there's still something of a community left to fight for.

John Haag, by example, taught us to act locally, and think globally.

People educated people as to the consequences of what we called the Master's Plan. Venice would no longer be a community where one could live cheap, succeed or fail, but always have a home. We would be moved out shoved out arrested out.

The Vietnam War or the Peoples Republic of China did not enter into discussion while people were signing petitions against Police Brutality and rapacious landlords and speaking out against the banks' hostile attitudes towards low-income homeowners.

That didn't mean John didn't care passionately about the rest of the world and in particular what the effect of U.S. policy had on the rest of the world. But he didn't believe in lecturing or yelling at people to convince them. He just did what he did, explained what he did and why, and by gummy, some people would come to agree with him, or at least respect him for having cogent reasons for his beliefs and actions. He never became "more Mao than thou" in his efforts. He did not see himself as morally superior.

He made revolution, change fun. There was no need to dress in Mao suits or frown at musicals.

You could write poetry about love and nonsense and still change the world. Because isn't that why we wanted the world changed? To have fun? Some people disagreed, and set up cells and called for armed revolt. John was a pacifist and a man of good sense who pointed out that the gov't had most of the ammunition.

But John was always gracious and respectful and he believed in having fun while building a world where everyone could have fun.

I miss you John.

John Haag, The Quiet Revolutionary

When I think of comparisons for John Haag's personal nature, Che Guevara comes to mind. I'm reminded of Che because of John's sensitive personality, his artistic - even poetic - approach to life and politics, and his relentless devotion to the welfare of others. Also because John's work took place 'in the belly of the beast.' And finally because his influence has affected so many organizers in the endless struggle for what he so succinctly termed "self-determination."

Such a simple phrase: 'self-determination.' So radically subversive and antithetical to the 'other-determined' life lived by most Americans and so many people around the globe. Such an alarming but essential approach to community identity in a world of corporate branding, computerized-grouping, lockstep party affiliations, top-down government, grocery store check-out scans, and even - as I recall - product logos rolled into the sand between OFW and the tideline. Me? Run my own life? What a concept!

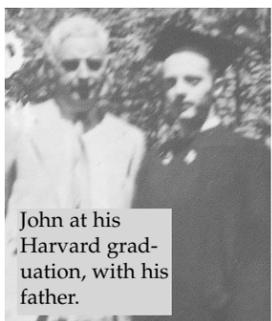
John was my greatest mentor when I arrived in Venice in the landmark political year of 1968. In those years Oingo Boingo and Severance were playing the local clubs; Earl Newman was making silk-screen posters on what was then called West Washington Boulevard, and The Free Venice Beachhead was just hitting the streets. The Beachhead Collective would gather for lengthy sessions laying out the paper - long before computerized paste-up came along. The Free Venice Movement was in full swing.

It was a heady experience back then. National politics were in chaos; California was a hot-house of ideologies; and Venice was itself a psychedelic soup of leaders, personalities, and alternative approaches to community organization. Through it all John was a fountainhead of both strategy and tactics. He knew how to 'count votes,' but he also knew how to have a good time. He enjoyed the Venetian mind-set that sprang from the audacious idea that Venice knew best what Venice needed. He rebelled against the manipulations of Venice by a distant City Hall that was always willing to embrace and promote some new luxury wet-dream to turn the marvelously exotic into just another condo-common-place.

With long dark hair pulled back revealing white strands, he seemed to belong to an older generation far more knowledgeable than a White Boy Do-Gooder VISTA Volunteer who had just graduated college. I recognized experience when I saw it, and spent the next two decades as a student, learning from both John and Anna (and others).

But what attracted me was more than John's political acumen. John loved to laugh. In the midst of the fiercest political debate he was willing to walk the beach or head off into the night for a break, leaving the 'serious and important' behind. His smile was broad, and his friendship a thing of beauty. I remember the meetings that took place organizing the first Venice Independence Day Parade in 1978. People were building community around the theme of Venice's absurd history and identity. It was the Politics of Joy, and I don't believe I ever saw John have more fun. Maybe my memory is shot, but I think it was John who came up with the title for the video documentary we made: "damn everything but the circus" - taken from a poem by e.e. cummings. For a very long time John Haag was a ringmaster of the Three Rings every reader of the Beachhead knows and loves. We shall not see his like again.

Bravo! John. No community ever had a more-loyal defender or protector. Thanks for all the education, inspiration and comradeship. Your intelligent insights into the political process; your leadership in the empowerment of individuals and the Venice community, and your love of life



John at his Harvard graduation, with his father.

are still being transferred to new generations. Abbot is smiling in Huckster Heaven, and you've got an eternal pass on the Race Through the Clouds. Free Venice!

-Lance Diskan
Venice 1968-92 -
Venetian Forever

If not for John...

For anyone planning to write a community history of contemporary Venice (1945-2005), a political overview would need to be prepared. Any political sketch of this period could not be written with addressing the role of John Haag. If not for John, elements of Prairie Fire, several corp of resident property owners in North Venice (both 'right' and 'left'), and Werner Shaarf and Associates, the political history of Venice would not have developed the way that it did.

It is not my intention to elaborate on the above history in this letter, but simply to acknowledge the debt of gratitude that all politically conscious people in today's Venice community owe to John. John helped change the course of contemporary Venice history and helped make Venice what it is today.

I arrived in Venice politically in 1968, just after taking a teaching position at CSULB. I had lived in North Beach since 1964, but graduate school at UCLA, dissertation, marriage and settling down occupied my time. The Santa Monica Evening Outlook newspaper, and then The Beachhead, kept me as up to date as I cared to be about Venice politics. At that time it seemed everything was about - North Venice re-development, nude beach, beats and poseurs, rock and roll, and street people. Prior to 1972 that's about what I knew of Venice politics.

I first encountered John Haag in the pages of both the Venice Beachhead and in the Outlook, not at the Venice West. Then, after 1972, I heard him speak at meetings, heard him present at the Beachhead collective, and witnessed his inspired and tireless work in the formation of the Peace and Freedom party. John actually was one of the lead activists who helped build the national party from a very energetic base in Venice. In fact the Venice Organizing Committee, led by John, coordinated the founding of P & F chapters all over the country. John lit the spark and 'carried a load' in this campaign.

Over the course of several decades I watched John do political work in Venice. He was an inspiration and I, along with many others understood that and were drawn into political life here as a result of John's work. He worked closely then with Benjamin Spock.

In the long run, I suppose what captured me for John was his politics. He was an anarchist..., sometimes he could be libertarian, and often a liberal. He was never C.P., never Progressive Labor, never Revolutionary Communist Party. John was not a stereotypical Anarchist, not cut from the caricatures painted by some academics or by op ed writers, or for that matter by the popular culture. John believed in order, in discipline, and in intense collective work. He didn't believe that there was a real contradiction between the 'ideas' of self defining and determining community and the strategy to realize the same. He was very practical in that sense at least. Very practical for a poet, for an anarchist.

He was that kind of anarchist. Perhaps it's best to call him an anarcho-syndicalist, or a communitarian. He didn't ever grow misty eyed over 'class struggle' or 'workers of the world unite'. He was very much taken with acting and organizing locally. John was an organizer first and foremost, a principled organizer, a communitarian, and an anarchist.

This type of politics led him into conflict with other local Venice political activists, not just



John Haag and Anna Ricci wedding in Rome, April 6, 1959

from the 'chamber of commerce and petty bourgeois right', but from the hard liners and doctrinaires on the left. I distinctly recall that John stood up to them - at The Beachhead; at the Town Council; in meetings of community activists in Venice; he stood up to their rhetoric and ideological blandishments. Much of the disagreement was aired at meetings in the Venice canals, and in confrontations at meetings of the Free Venice organization and at the Beachhead. These became legend among the Venice activists and I'm certain that many can still recount those 'delicious' tales to this day.

I admired John for his courage and for his independence. Without John and his political posture and prominence, I probably never would have become as deeply committed to Venice political activism as I did.

John was an inspiration. My hat is off to him and to his memory.

If anyone would like to donate any materials associated with John...essays, letters, poetry, photos..., I would be glad to accept such and put that away for safe keeping in the Venice Archives, Special Collections, CSULB. Here it will be safe until Venice gets its own archive. Meanwhile John will be in the good company of another great Southern California political activist and organizer, Dorothy Healy, whose papers are also housed at CSULB. The archives are professionally maintained and open to the public.

I can be reached at: ulanbator@venice-ca.com

-Arnold Springer

The news when I read it made me feel so sad. In my mind I see John as I first saw him in 1959, slender clean shaven revolutionary standing in the candle light shadows of the Venice West Cafe, Anna at his side, reading A history Lesson to a full house.

In Memory of John Haag

Classical Jazz for John

Any man or woman's death diminishes me, man. Be'cuz I'm a part of man & womankind. Therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It toll for thee, man. It tolls for thee.

Peace, John. Peace.

-Bill Fleeman

1968

John Haag Says:

John Haag, 37, a nine-year resident of Venice, was founding president of the Westside ACLU Chapter. A poet, he operated the Venice West Coffee House, has been a political commentator on Radio Station KPFFK and was one of the founders of the Peace and Freedom Party.

Haag says, "We don't need any more freeways in the beach areas. We do need mass rapid transit at low cost or free, but we must oppose the current SCRTD transit scheme—the plan is already obsolete and is designed to swindle, rather than benefit, the people.

"During the past few years the poor, including artists, retired homeowners and black people, have been driven out of the Ocean Front area of Venice. We intend to reverse this trend and are now organizing to achieve effective control of community affairs: housing, building development, schools, parks and police. Electoral campaigns should raise issues around which people can organize for action throughout the year."



John Haag, candidate for State Senate, 25th District

The Torture Memo

By Judith Martin Straw

I've stopped using the word "torture", as I've come to the realization that it does not really apply to the things I've been using it to describe. Well, sitting in that traffic on the 405 in the pouring rain, it was just...no, it wasn't really. It was kind of frustrating, that it took so long to get from one place to another, but I'm in a comfortable car with a soothing voice on the radio keeping me company. It wasn't that bad. Not torture. The visit to the dentist to get my teeth cleaned, no, not my idea of fun, but these things need to be done. And then, they discovered I'd cracked a tooth around a filling and needed more work. The drilling, the noise, the pain after the novacaine wore off- not a load of laughs, but it wasn't torture.

My government uses torture. My government thinks it is utterly justified in using the most horrifying, degrading abuse imaginable to get information out of people who they think might have some. This is so outrageous to me, I'm sickened whenever I think of it. And I truly hate to think of it, in any way, at all.

I am, admittedly, someone with a really low tolerance for violence. It's just amazing to me that so many of us take it so much for granted, it does not arouse the smallest protest. Consider the television shows that begin with a crime, or a corpse, as if a dead body were just another empty grocery bag blowing down the street. As if it were not someone whose life had a meaning, a person who had friends and a family, a member of the human race who would be missed. Just another "call HQ, we got a body here..." and then on to the next commercial for aspirin. So, since we're all supposed to be home watching our three or four hours of fun suspenseful murder games every night, we're not at all alarmed. Violence? You're soaking in it! It's not a surprise that we don't take notice of the real live cruelties we inflict on our "prisoners of war." I am astounded that anyone can read the front page of the paper and ingest breakfast at the same time.

It does connect with the essence of the problem when one begins the study of non-violence.

We have to call this concept "non-violence". It doesn't make sense to us to use a word like peace or ahimsa or love. We must make it understandable by describing what it isn't. It's not (the usual order of the day) violence. It begins with language, and how we choose to use it.

For myself, I've decided to wash the war out of my mouth. I will not be attacking the dirty dishes in the sink. If it were an attack, wouldn't it make more sense to just smash them all to bits rather than wash them and put them away? I'm choosing not to describe my life in terms of battles. If I'm looking at my calendar for the week and making up a battle plan, it seems I've already decided it's going to be a bloody, painful struggle, and someone will have to be declared the loser for me to know that it's over.

I will not use the word torture describe traffic or dental work. I will use it in my letters to the editor, to congress, to my senators, and to the executive branch. I will use it to declaim that my government's actions and duplicitous policies are just as wrong as wrong gets. I think it's the only reason we aren't all screaming about this horror as loudly as possible; we just hate to think about it, we're just shocked into disbelief and silence. But in so many ways, silence is complicity, and if we are frightened into silence, the real terrorists have won.

If you are going to use the word, torture, make it a practice of non-silence. Speak it in the poetry of peace.

I have such an aversion to torture that even reading a description of a particular practice is enough to turn my stomach. Then, it stays with me. Just as an example, the novel "The Assault" by Muelisch, is a story that starts at the end of WW2 in the Netherlands, and in it's description of the appalling practices of a despised collaborator contains a torture that was so disgusting, so painful and humiliating, I've never been able to forget it. I wish I remembered the peace rally in the last section of the book with equal clarity.



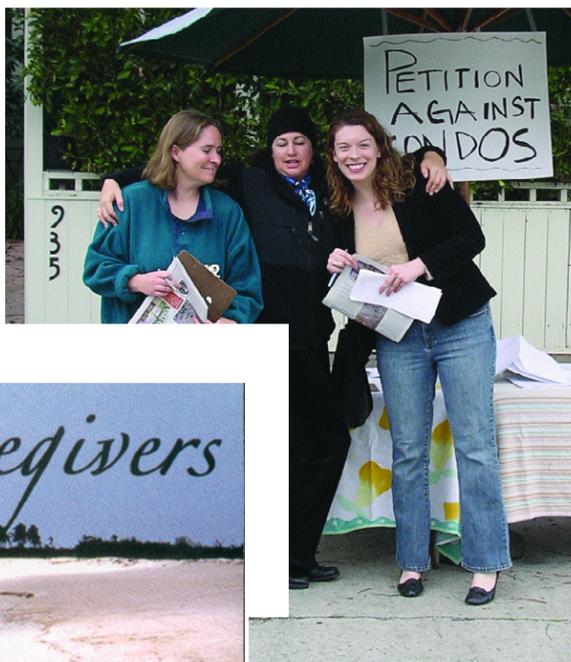
Oakwood Rally Against Threats Brings Out Media, Rosendahl

A letter from a resident near Oakwood Park that made slurs against Black neighbors and threatened to take the law into his own hands if the police didn't act against alleged drug dealing caused an uproar in the surrounding community.

A community protest was held April 22 in the park, followed by a march and press conference, at which City Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, Stan Muhammad of Venice 2000 and others in the community spoke.



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Petition Against Condos

Dawn Sassoon, Trisa Malisoff and Heather Szerlag collected 300 signatures from their neighbors on Palm Blvd. against yet another condo project by Frank Murphy.

In spite of the neighborhood opposition, both the Neighborhood Council's Land Use and Planning Committee and Board recommended the project to the City for development.

Meanwhile, opposition to condo projects is running so high in Venice and surrounding communities that a hearing on condo conversions is to be held at Walgrove Elementary School at 6 pm on May 22. See letter from Bill Rosendahl on page two for details.

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The World Oil Crisis and Mass Transportation

By John Bachar

If a frog is placed in a pot of water that is slowly brought to a boil in such a way that the imperceptible heat change is not noticed by the frog, then it will not jump out of the pot. If a frog is dropped into a pot of boiling water, it will immediately jump out. In which state are we traffic-choked, urbanite frogs?

Only one trillion barrels of petroleum reserves are left on Earth, and only one new barrel is found for every four used. With over 30 billion barrels consumed annually worldwide (2004) and rapidly increasing, there is less than 34 years left. Then it's all gone! Of the 48 petroleum-producing countries, only 15 can supply their own internal needs; the remaining 33 must supplement their internal needs with imports. The US domestic reserve supply is only 22 billion barrels (it imports over 60% of its annual consumption), and if there were no imports, US oil would run out in less than THREE YEARS (7.4 billion barrels consumed annually – 25% of the annual world consumption)! The US transportation sector alone consumes two-thirds annually (4.9 billion barrels), and the US fleet of 235 million highway vehicles uses 3.9 billion (53 percent of annual US consumption).

Clearly, a sustainable energy source must soon be found to replace the impending worldwide petroleum exhaustion. Undoubtedly it will be solar, but MUCH TIME is needed to develop the technology for this transition. The most effective means for buying time is by drastically reducing the use of petroleum in the transportation sector. Since most (over 90%) of highway vehicle petroleum use is in urban regions, it follows that the solution is the implementation of very extensive urban mass transit systems. Even if there were an INFINITE supply of petroleum, it is critical that urban mass transit must be used to eliminate our ubiquitous urban traffic quagmire (24/7 gridlock virtually everywhere in the US, and especially in California and the LA region). Urban mass transit is the only logical method that can vastly reduce urban highway petroleum usage, thereby buying critical time for solar technology development, and that can eliminate the traffic quagmire, simultaneously (see below: "FUMTS" can reduce traffic volume in the six county Southern California region [SCR] by 90%!).

In the current urban transportation situation, there is:

(1) enormous waste and a staggering exhaustion

- of the rapidly diminishing nonrenewable petroleum resources on Earth;
- (2) unhealthful air quality, resulting in death and impaired health for tens of thousands, and contributing heavily to global warming;
- (3) pervasive 24/7 gridlock traffic conditions resulting in millions of wasted hours daily by millions of passengers;
- (4) high accident occurrences, resulting in death and injury and extensive, expensive property damage and medical costs for tens of thousands;
- (5) staggeringly expensive vehicle insurance, maintenance, operational and acquisition costs for the hundreds of millions of licensed drivers who own hundreds of millions of vehicles;
- (6) enormous road/street maintenance costs and waste of fossil energy for road construction and maintenance;
- (7) ubiquitous parking space/parking lot congestion and expense for millions;
- (8) unhealthful high and constant noise pollution, especially damaging to those in the vicinity of freeways and main roads.



Art by Wayne Kilgore

The implementation of the FARELESS URBAN MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM (FUMTS) solves the aforementioned problems. This system provides an optimum model for any large urban region. The features of FUMTS will now be described (go to "<http://www.scfs-la.org/>" and click on "World Fossil Energy Crisis and Fareless Urban Mass Transportation" - author John Bachar - for the complete detailed analysis).

- (1) No fares will be charged to any user. FUMTS will be financed by a net-wealth tax on the upper 1% of the appropriate adult population, so that 99% of the citizens will bear no cost. (In California, the wealthiest 1% of the California adult population has over \$2.5 trillion in net wealth; in the US, the figure is \$25 trillion).
- (2) In SCR, 25,400 buses would comprise FUMTS at an annual cost of \$5.6 billion; in the urban regions of California, 48,000 buses are needed at a cost of \$10.5 billion; in the US, 324,000 buses are needed at a cost of \$71 billion.
- (3) In California, the wealthiest 1% of the adult population would be assessed annually only 0.42% of their net wealth to yield the required \$10.5 billion; in the US, the figure is only a 0.28% assessment to yield the required \$71 billion.
- (4) Annually, for the SCR, California and USA urban cases:
 - (a) The cost of FMUTS is only 10.5% to 11.1% of the current cost of the essentially all-

auto mode (only 2% of all passenger travel is by public transit)! For every \$1 spent for the FMUTS mode, the average motorist spends \$9.03 to \$9.50!

(b) The fuel consumption for FMUTS is only 8.7% to 9.5% of that of the current essentially all-auto mode! For every one gallon of fuel used in the FMUTS mode, the all-auto mode requires 10.5 to 11.5 gallons!

(c) The fuel savings that accrue by use of FMUTS are 5.24 billion, 9.04 billion, and 56.96 billion gallons, respectively; the savings in equivalent barrels of crude petroleum are 276 million, 476 million, and 3.05 billion barrels, respectively; the 10-year savings are 2.76 billion, 4.76 billion, and 30.5 billion barrels, respectively!

(d) The pollutants from FMUTS are 10.1% to 10.2% of those for the current essentially all auto mode!.

(5) The travel time using FMUTS is vastly less than using one's personal vehicle for almost everyone.

THIS IS ABSOLUTE: Ever-increasing gridlock is ever-increasing gridlock, enormous petroleum waste is enormous petroleum waste, enfeebling wasted time is enfeebling wasted time, and staggeringly expensive costs are staggeringly expensive costs by any other euphemisms.

If we rigorously use our human reason both to discover and acknowledge the facts about our current transportation quagmire, and if we follow the logical implications for effective human action that such knowledge entails, then we can free ourselves of our plight. Failing this, we are doomed by mindless apathy, irrationality, ignorance and the stranglehold of the powerfully entrenched corporate interests to suffer our endlessly worsening transportation afflictions.

John Bachar is Professor Emeritus of Mathematics from California State University, Long Beach, Guest Mathematician at UCLA, and a member of both the Science in the Public Interest Transportation Task Group and the SCFS Executive Board. A copy of an analysis of Los Angeles regional transportation can be obtained by contacting the SCFS office at (310) 390-3898.

[The third in a Beachhead series from the Southern California Federation of Scientists (SCFS)]

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John Haag and the Peace and Freedom Party

In 1971, when I was 18 years old, I participated in an anti-war rally when the annual Army Ball was held at the Beverly Hilton. Someone handed me a flyer promoting a national gathering to form an alternative political party. A couple of weeks later I just showed up unannounced at the Peace and Freedom Party headquarters in Venice when a caravan was preparing to depart for Albuquerque.

I was accepted into their company immediately and we drove to Arizona where we camped for the night. It was obvious to me as a newcomer that John Haag was the point person with whom all conferred when problems needed to be solved. People sang songs and John read some poetry as we sat around the campfire. When we reached Albuquerque the next day, we found the city occupied by the National Guard. There had been no national news coverage of the military control, but it had stemmed from a confrontation between young people attending a concert and the local police. What frightened the government was that Chicano, White and Black youth were all united in their right to enjoy music together without police interference.

Our meeting venue had been put off limits, and we were relocated to an abandoned adobe-style house on the outskirts of town, belonging to a doctor who believed in universal health care. Among our company of nearly 200 activists from around the country were Gore Vidal and Dr. Benjamin Spock. Among the groups there were the New Party, New Mexico Independent Party, Montana New Reform Party, Ann Arbor Radical Independent Party (which later grew into the Michigan Human Rights Party), the Wisconsin Alliance, DC Statehood Party, Vermont Liberty Union, Monroe County NY Liberal Party, and many others. We formed "The Coalition" that later became the national People's Party and ran Ben Spock for President in 1972.

When we got back to California, I got active in Peace and Freedom Party. That gave me the opportunity to work with John Haag on a regular basis. Despite his role as a leader, he was an unassuming fellow. He was easy to speak with, and was focused on the tasks at hand. John was good with detail but always looked at the big picture.

As often happens in politics, a split occurred. In 1974, Peace and Freedom Party was torn asunder by two factions. One was a laissez faire grouping that became the nucleus of what later achieved ballot status as the Libertarian Party. The other was a conglomeration of left leaning radicals under the banner of feminist socialism. In between was the Unity Caucus trying to emphasize the commonality of the factions and to prevent a split, consisting of such stalwarts as John Haag, CT Weber, John Donahue and myself. When the Libertarians walked out of the state convention in 1974, most of the Unity Caucus left as well, and I was about the only one to remain and help build a self-styled "feminist socialist" Peace and Freedom Party of California.

It was years before I saw John Haag again. He was drawn back into the party he had helped to found when his old colleague Jack Hampton ran for State Assembly in the mid-1980s. I petitioned to get Jack on the ballot, and we were delighted when John stepped in to become his campaign manager. Soon John met Martha who became his closest ally for many years.

John stayed active for a few more years before health issues and other personal priorities diverted his attention from political organizing. He remained a presence in "Free Venice" and in the poetry and art communities. His contributions are already legendary.

Most of all, John Haag is someone I will remember who was totally honest and truly reliable. He was an elder statesman of the peace movement who helped to bring more than one teenager, as I was, into commitment to lifetime dedication to working for liberty, democracy and equality.

-Casey Peters



Freedom's Warrior – the life of John Haag, Venetian

John and Anna Haag had two biological children, Duanna and Thomas Paine Haag. But in a sense, all Venetians are their children. Our continuing identity with this little seaside community comes from their words and deeds. We Venetians - and if you don't like being called a Venetian, then you probably aren't one of their children - are inspired to defend our community, often against seemingly hopeless odds, by their example. They are our role models, not the cigar-smoking developer and tobacco magnate, Abbot Kinney.

Anna Ricci Haag died in 2003 of cancer. A moving memorial took place on the beach with the participation of many Venetians, including her long-ago husband, John. He had met this small-town Italian beauty in Rome, and swept her off her feet. They married and not long after, in 1959, they moved from Rome to Venice (California). They took over the Venice West Cafe in 1962 from John Kenevan, who had got it from Stuart Perkoff, who was perhaps Venice's greatest poet and the founder of the now-famous coffee house that was located at 7 Dudley Avenue.

Venice had been a disreputable place for decades, but now with people spouting poetry and playing music, Venetians were becoming insufferable. L.A. City Councilmember Karl Rundberg, who preceded Pat Russell, who preceded Ruth Galanter, who preceded Cindy Miscikowski, who preceded Bill Rosendahl as the representative of Venice, introduced a city council resolution banning "the beating of drums and playing of other instruments on beaches..." according to the book, *Venice West*, by John Arthur Maynard. Then councilmember Tom

Bradley objected but the city plowed on. Maynard quotes from a letter John Haag sent to the city council, "There is little enough joy in today's world. Let us not stifle what is left. Let us not make our city known as the city that outlawed music."

John well knew that music wasn't the real issue at stake. Then, as now, it was development. Mayor Sam Yorty said he was in favor of bulldozing Venice and starting over. It might have happened without John. Abandoning the political passivity of the Beats, John found his true calling in life as a political organizer. Like Athena springing from Zeus' forehead, organizations emerged full-blown from his brow: the Venice ACLU, the Venice Forum (not to be confused with its current day opposite by the same name), the Venice Survival Committee, and later, Free Venice, the Beachhead and the Peace and Freedom Party. And he was not above joining existing organizations, including Venice/Santa Monica CORE, the Congress of Unrepresented People (COUP), the Southern California Conference on Vietnam and the Ad Hoc Committee to End Police Malpractice.

John, with a small band of merry women and men, including Anna (the marriage was ending but not the political cooperation), Rick Davidson, Marge Buckley, Jane Gordon, Bea Free, Carol Berman, Phil Chamberlain, Marvena Kennedy, Steve Clare, Bob Wells, Mary Lou Johnson, Tom O'Conner and a few others took on and foiled the goals of powerful Los Angeles interests that wanted either to bulldoze Venice (as they had much of Ocean Park), run a freeway through it, bring yachts into the canals and build



The "Drum Circle," circa 1960. John is to the left of the drummer.



Photo by Bill Daley

high-rises along Ocean Front Walk. Today, we are still fighting those same forces, who often have the same goals. Meanwhile, John and his political offsprings have bought us 40 years in which Venice has flowered as an arts haven, and a real community.

My own association with John was mostly in passing until recent years. Aside from my interview with John in 1969 (see page 10), a class project when I was a student at Valley State College, I'd mostly see John at demonstrations where he was one of the leaders and I was one of the "extras."

As the years passed, I'd run into John walking down the street, or pass him in my car on the way to a union organizing campaign somewhere miles away. Like many others, I worried about the future of Venice, but I felt secure just knowing that John was on the job, holding back those forces that would overwhelm us if they could. But they couldn't, because John was there, as in the photo of him peacefully confronting the cop at the Venice jail. That photo should be made into a statue and placed in the Circle, as a constant reminder that we must speak truth to power if we want to be free.

Through the years, John fought against police abuse, against discrimination, for a building moratorium. He saw through the games developers play, that many others fell for. When John ran for office or spoke at Town Council meetings, he always spoke up for those without power, and against those with too much power.

The Beachhead was John's idea, although he was much too modest to take credit for any successful venture. He saw clearer than anyone else that a newspaper could tie our community together. It would spread the word of what was happening in the canals, or Oakwood, or North Beach, far beyond the small group that was fighting for their homes or their rights. And 38 years later, it's still performing that function. It's still one of John's children.

And so it was with the Peace and Freedom Party. John came to understand the need for a third party, not through an intellectual process alone but through his own experience. He had run for the State Assembly in 1964 as a Democrat. He was active in reform movements within that party until he realized that the Democratic party would always drag its feet on getting out of Vietnam, in standing up for real integration and equality and for basic human rights.

John once told me that he had been in Seattle for a visit and met some people who were talking about forming a party dedicated to freedom and peace in the state of Washington. When he returned to Venice, he suggested that a campaign begin to put a third party on the ballot, called the Peace and Freedom Party. The campaign was successful in 1967 and Venice and Berkeley became the centers of the new movement.

Around the same time, supporters of the arch-segregationist George Wallace put the American Independent Party on the ballot.

The emergency of new parties on the left and right were but two of the signs that a fundamental shift in politics were underway. In short order, Gene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy became anti-war presidential candidates and Lyndon Johnson bailed out. Bobby got shot in L.A. and the Democrats ended their rebelliousness by nominating Hubert Horatio Humphrey who was dispatched by "Tricky Dick" Nixon. John's vision of the need for a third party was confirmed. John was state chairperson of P&F at one time, and ran for a variety of offices including Lt. Governor and state Controller. He initiated successful campaigns in other states to put P&F on their ballots.

-continued on page 9

CENTURION'S COMPLAINT

By John Haag

I tell you, Rome ain't what it used to be:
the town's got fat, the boys don't want to fight
or want to fight for spoils; they've got in sight
some manor house or mansion by the sea.
We don't know what we fight for any more:
time was, the farmers fought for their own farms;
now it's nobles' slaves we keep down by arms,
and lucky if we eat, outside the corps.
We've planted the wide world with Roman graves
and still plow on; but can you tell me why
the lordlings dance and banquet while we die?
That jewish cult that claims even the slaves
have souls is gaining ground, and no surprise you
push a guy too far and he gets wise.

MISSION TO THE EAST

By John Haag

*It's strange to feel tranquil, almost at peace
up here above it all, snugly enclosed,
our complex eggs packed close behind the nose,
while shrieking bombers race us to the East.
The clouds break up to show us bits of sea,
the navigator checks our way to land,
the bomb release fits firmly in my hand:
it all seems ordered, just as it should be.
For us so long familiar with the sky,
(not thinking now that when our bomb-clouds rise,
they'll fuse the earth and tear apart the skies)
it's only natural that men should fly.
How calmly, with a clean and shaven face,
I ride the mission that may end the race.*

They surround me
jostle me
with memories
I fall stubbing my sanity on
alternate reality
they flit from one dimension to another
chattering shivering, crouching in corners
they whisper indecipherable messages
unsubstance of the insubstantial grey fog
I am not afraid my hackles lie docile against my nape.
1-800-psychic Quick answer before
my free time is up no skeletal fingers
beckon me or low mournful wailing are they who they
were when they were here or are they who they are
but not as they were?
another clue.
They laugh in papery whispers hissing in my
ear distracting me from things to do
lulling me to sleep before the wrap up of "Law and Order"
only shadows of shades who knew me when
would do that only remnants of friends lovers
relatives would nag in the language of a parallel
universe—blowing out lit candles
Crossing over does not mature them
Revenants leave cosmic
remnants of cosmic baggage
at my door
they didn't have time to pack it all
in
what with the unexpected
swiftness of the
Deadline
and all
I'll bring it with
when I
cross
over

Carol Fondiller

Eyes of Power

Haag of Venice
Hague of Truth
Hague of Justice
So spoke the soothe
In stature I met him, dying and frail.
Yet a candle burned hot, in eyes so pale.
Standing lastly profound, words he spoke,
Immortal of Venice, a last dying toke,
Of life so rich the people did sing,
Of a humble servant of Venice, who truly
was King
—John Davis

PICKING OUR BONES BEFORE WE ARE DEAD

(thanks to P.L. for letting me "borrow" this)

By C.V. Beck

It is considered polite to wait until someone is no longer breathing
before you strip them of what was theirs
It is considered polite to help our elders cross the street
and not run them over because YOU are in a hurry
It is considered polite to let sleeping dogs lie
in the streets of Venice
It is considered polite and democratic to include
a wide swath of divers persons to be eligible to vote
and not just the people you know—
by face, by name, by profession and
their phone numbers by heart
I know it's just plain incredible but you
don't know everyone in Venice yet and it seems
apparent you are only interested in knowing one
category of persons, that is, of course,
people exactly like you

humanity

by hillary kaye

something is crawling all over our humanity
and the word is getting out.
exactly who is in charge
and the people are implicated
how can the hand not know what the arm is doing

there may not be more chances for redemption
ask the children, they'll tell you
don't you see them
don't you think they understand the
question what is right and what is wrong?
alone they march through corridors and are made to
excel in a failing world.

THREE HAIKU

Frog climbing young bark
textured vocal pulsations
great big appetite.

Dripping toe of ice
as glacier evaporates
willow's silent tears.

Thorny lemon tree
suspense of seeds and citrus
trading fruit for blood.

—Hal Bogotch

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**Freedom's Warrior –
the life of John Haag, Venetian
—continued from page 8**

He led door-to-door campaigns that boosted P&F registration to more than 1,600 in Venice.

When it was formed, Peace & Freedom was the only progressive party on the California ballot. In the 70s, the Libertarians split off and formed their own party, as did the Greens much later. There was ferment in the Peace and Freedom Party in the late 80s to make it the California affiliate of the Green Party. The Venice Chapter of P&F was mostly part of the "Green Caucus" of P&F. When the national Greens decided they wanted the California party to be called "Green," they began a successful drive to register a new party. Some of those in P&F left to join the new Green party. But John remained an enthusiastic P&F member until the end.

By the early 90s, John had retired from political activity due to a number of infirmities including diabetes. In 2002, a group of Venice activists began talking about reviving the Beachhead as a monthly publication. The paper had staggered through the 90s on a more and more sporadic publication schedule. Yolanda Miranda and I were delegated to talk to John and, hopefully, get his blessing. John had become something of a hermit, and especially did not like to be disturbed before noon. We knocked with trepidation on the door of the garage where he was living (political activists don't accumulate much of a retirement nest egg). "Who's there?" came a voice. Yolanda blurted out "Peace and Freedom," and the door swung open. As it turned out, John was very pleased that a new collective was going to carry on the Beachhead tradition. He supplied

us with some of his poems, and contributed money. He even agreed to some public appearances where he spoke mainly about the Beachhead and the Peace and Freedom Party.

Recently, John's health declined even more, as did his contacts with Venice activists. He reluctantly turned down a University of Venice forum, a few months ago, on restoring Venice cityhood, another issue close to his heart. He just didn't have the strength, he said. He was also in a good deal of pain much of the time. In March, he came down with pneumonia and was admitted to the UCLA hospital. He seemed to have beat it off, and was transferred to a nursing home because he was still too weak to go home. It was either there, or at the hospital, that he contracted a staph infection, and died. John Haag lived from Dec. 14, 1930 to March 29, 2006. All his children mourn him.

But John would have us not mourn, but organize. Let me suggest the following ways to honor/emulate John Haag. 1) Join the Peace and Freedom Party. John's spirit lives on in P&F in its democratic traditions and its uncompromising opposition to militarism. 2) Support the Beachhead: distribute a bundle to your neighbors, take out an advertisement, become a sustainer, write an article or poem. 3) Work to "Free Venice" from Los Angeles and create a self-governing community. 4) And finally, the Venice Peace and Freedom Chapter would like your help in creating an everyday reminder to the people of Venice of what John stood for and his unselfish contribution to the Venice spirit, perhaps by renaming a street for him, or the Venice Circle or some other fitting memorial that would make people think about a life spent in the pursuit of freedom for all.

—Jim Smith

time to fight the good fight!!!

i was shocked to hear that john haag has departed this realm of existence on march 29.....

john among many has been an inspiration to myself and others that we the people don't need to achieve results for communities in a pigheaded bureaucratic way....i recall the start of the peace and freedom party back in the 60's while lbj was raining bombs in vietnam in the "name of democracy"

the peace and freedom party was another way of tackling the issues of racism, war, poverty, etc. in ways that were more meaningful compared to the dumbocrats and the repugnikkans....anyway, john was there at the forefront calling for a "free venice" unshackled from the monolith of corporate los angeles!!

now we have gone thru many a struggle, and i am dealing with my own health issues after having gone thru the likes of the griffith park love-ins, antiwar marches, marijuana marches, and other yippies rallies.....now i must mourn for the departure of brother john haag.....

hey john, you live on!!! time to fight the good fight!!!

—Aron Pieman Kay

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MENS women's KIDS & BABIES

John Haag, that elegant iconoclast

I'm sitting in my calm Berkeley home office, mourning quietly for John Haig. I'll let those of you who knew the man better write the eulogies and tributes.

I knew John mostly as that elegant iconoclast with the throaty laugh and tight pony tail whose politics impressed my hard-to-impress mother, Mary Lou Johnson.

I met him when I was a kid, and mostly found him to be unintelligible, like most of my mom's associates. After all, my concerns were really much more focused on the end result of his philosophy not the source of it. He was one of the driving forces behind all the wonderful sociological principles that, along with the miracle of the Pacific Ocean, defined the Venice of my childhood.

John (and Anna and my mom, and Rick and Marge and Carol and Steve and Bob and and and) established, maintained and promoted the notion of a 'free Venice.' And while all those adults were bandying about words like, 'redevelopment,' 'radical democracy,' 'greedy speculators' and 'urban development master plan' there was a horde Venice kids, tan and salty, running up and down the boardwalk they sought to save.

They were discussing socialism and justice while we were hopping trams, stubbing toes, surfing and skating on the very ground they were defending. They were sealing a moment in time as we were being tattooed by having the good fortune of growing up in the strange beach-front slum that was the Venice beach they were arguing to save.

I'm 47 now. My two kids are growing up in a culture of 'playdates' and computer games. Our neighborhood is sweet, folks are generally nice liberal Berkeley types. The streets are at right angles and get swept with regularity. Everyone recycles and lots of my neighbors eat organic. But compared to my childhood environs, its rather non-descript. However, in some funny way, as plain as it is, I feel all those Venice Peace and Freedom party Venetians presence here.

I doubt that we would have a recycling program or fridges full of organic agri-business food products if it weren't for the efforts of a bunch of oddball poets and thinkers that John rallied up into a collected mass of political action.

They were mavericks, and ironically John Haig might be accused of being one of the first 'real estate speculators'. Face it, it took a lot of vision see any value of Venice-by-the-Sea in the late '50s.

But unlike the capitalist wave of speculation that hit the beach in the late '60s, John was speculating in the realm of community. He was looking for an investment of commitment, love and energy, and offering a return of having a real home. He wanted to keep a little slice of beach livable for folks whose contribution to society was art, music, laughter, passion, poetry and humor. He wanted to keep the streets as crooked as were the denizens of 'where the debris meets the sea.' And at least by me, he was successful.

As a kid, my Venice was free. John, Mary Lou, Carole, Rick and and and made sure of that. I remember being in the ocean all day, all summer long. I remember being part of a pack of kids tromping through the canals, skittering up and down Speedway and bounding across the beach barefoot and brazen. We skateboarded up and down every concrete surface we could find, leaving a lot of our elbow and knee skin on those sidewalks. I swear every one of those scrapes took in and sealed inside us some of the sidewalk and sand molecules, which will be with us until we join John and the rest of the Peace and Freedom party-ites in eternity.

Our hearts soaked up the energy of our elders, whose words may have soared over our heads but whose example and dedication to the proposition that everyone deserves to have a real neighborhood, and a real community and real involvement are indelible. May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing and may John rest in Peace and Freedom.

Love, -*Thos Singer* (nee Johanna Johnson)

1969 INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HAAG

By Jim Smith

The Venice Chapter of the Peace and Freedom Party has been in the vanguard of the movement against the Master Plan and the Canal Assessment Plan. The following interview was conducted with Community Organizer John Haag at party headquarters in Venice. Haag, in addition to being a longtime Venice resident, was his Party's candidate for Lt. Governor in the last election. His efforts have been largely responsible for building the Venice Chapter into a major force in the state party organization.

Jim Smith - Have community canal protests had any significant effect on plans to implement the Venice Canal Project?

John Haag - Yes and no. The protests have definitely delayed the project. We have delayed the Master Plan for a year by our efforts. And we have gained at least that much time in the Canal Projects hearing.

A lawsuit by the canal renters was successful in having the particular assessment plan, with which the city council was attempting to finance the project, declared unconstitutional. Bad business conditions have played a part in preventing contractors from taking on the costly development. Had we not delayed adoption, the project would have been released during a period of more favorable financial conditions. On the other hand, the whole project has only been delayed by our protests.

We have also forced the city council and other powers involved to take us into consideration in their plans. Our efforts have made it necessary that we be dealt with. We were barred, illegally, from one meeting, where only people who could prove they were property owners were admitted. At other times we were prevented from speaking.

We know that on every occasion that we planned a protest, we produced a lot of nervousness and paranoia on the part of the Council members.

Jim Smith - Have any attempts been made to have the meetings held in the Venice area instead of downtown Los Angeles?

John Haag - We've brought that point up and, in fact, several meetings on various aspects of the project were held in the Venice area. All but one, however, were almost totally made up of property owners. All hell broke loose in the only meeting open to the public. Since then there have been no public hearings in Venice.

Jim Smith - How has the community been affected by the campaign to mount an effective protest?

John Haag - It's really brought people together. The action has done much to give Venice residents a sense of community.

It's also had a demoralizing effect. For all the time and energy that's gone into it, we still haven't been able to defeat or alter the project. I think a lot of people have left Venice, probably sooner than they would have otherwise. It's made them more aware of what the political powers have in store for us - nothing less than the elimination of Venice as a low-income community. Not that awareness is bad, but a lot of people do feel powerless to do anything about it.

Jim Smith - Since organized protests have met with such limited success, what other tactics are possible in this case?

John Haag - The "Free Venice" movement to separate Venice from the city of Los Angeles was formed as a direct result of policies, such as this, directed against our community. We tried to get enough momentum behind that drive to actually de-annex Venice but it involves a very complex and difficult legal procedure.

There was a rumor going around that all prospective contractors received a letter stating that their equipment would be sabotaged if they took the project. I have no idea how much bearing this tactic had on the absence of any satisfactory bids from the contractors.

Jim Smith - During the last councilmanic campaign, the now councilwoman Pat Russell seemed to have reservations about the canal plans. What has been her position since she was elected?

John Haag - She's definitely in favor of the project. She suggested that low cost housing be build in the center of Venice Blvd. but has not made her approval contingent on any such proposals as low cost housing.

Jim Smith - How would you judge community response to the Peace and Freedom's role in the canal opposition?

John Haag - It's been very favorable. During 1969, Peace and Freedom registrations increased by 40 percent in Venice, a much faster rate than for the state as a whole. In the last city council election, the Peace and Freedom candidate, Rick Davidson, received between 10 and 30 percent in precincts that include the canals, as compared with a 4 percent showing districtwide.

Free Venice! by John Haag - Reprinted from the Free Venice Beachhead, Dec. 1, 1968, #1

Would you believe dancing in our Venice streets? Non-violent police? An art festival the length of Ocean Front Walk? A Venice radio station? Cooperative, low-cost housing? An art cinema and sidewalk coffee house? Experimental theater in the Pavillion? Schools that could teach what the kids wanted to learn? Venice planned and run by the people in it? A newspaper created by Venice writers?

I do. I used the recent elections campaign to raise the question of a campaign to free Venice from the City of Los Angeles, to free ourselves to create our own community.

As things stand now, we, the residents of Venice, have nothing to say about "our" police, who are hired, trained, assigned and commanded by downtown Los Angeles. Ditto for school teachers and administrators.

Venice poets don't read in the pavillion since their poems must first be approved by the Los Angeles Board of Recreation and Parks. Venice teen-agers don't dance in the streets because their dance must be permitted in advance by the Los Angeles Police Department. We don't plan our own community because plans are made for us by the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, and we don't even get to vote on their plans!

"Free Venice" means that we intend to create our own community with our own government - whatever form that may take -- our own schools, parks, libraries, housing, and culture. "We" are

all of us who care enough about Venice to want to live here, work here, create here, lie on our own beach--here.

Three times this year the Los Angeles police have told me and a lot of my friends, "If you want to stay out of jail, you better get out of Venice." My home is in Venice. I choose to stay in Venice. The Los Angeles police, the "enforcers" of the Los Angeles City government, got my job, my business, and my police record. I will fight for my home. So will a lot of friends.

Three times this year the Los Angeles police have told me (and a lot of my friends) to get out of Venice. They haven't convinced us. Rather, they have convinced us to get Venice out of Los Angeles.

Plans for creating a free Venice are now being discussed by the Free Venice Organizing Committee which is open to any Venice resident. Research has begun on procedures to de-annex Venice from Los Angeles. Much research remains to be done in such areas as identifying our tax base, essential civic services, alternative police systems, patterns of property ownership, city planning and a host of other subjects.

The Free Venice Organizing Committee meets presently as a part of Venice Peace and Freedom, Wednesdays, 8 p.m. at 1727 West Washington Blvd. As interest grows, the Committee will become an independent group run as its participants decide. Join us. Free Venice!



Young John

beyond baroque

May 7, Sunday — 5 PM

PAUL KOENIG and LESLIE MARYANN NEAL

PAUL KOENIG's poems have appeared in The Occidental Review, FTS, VCP Anthology, Poetry in the Windows V, and his chapbook is Miscellaneous Histories (Inevitable). LESLIE MARYANN NEAL's poetry has been published in Laughing Dog, Poetic diversity and unlikely stories. Her chapbooks and CDs include Paper-Thin Hearts and Mermaid. Co-hosted by SARAH MACLAY & LYNNE THOMPSON. Sign-up 4:45 PM. FREE.

Electric Lodge

BRIGHT BOY:

THE PASSION OF ROBERT McNAMARA

April 7-May 7 - Friday-Sat. 8 pm; Sunday 7 pm
By Katy Hickman Directed by James Eckhouse

Can America learn from history? Robert McNamara, Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, grapples with the major decisions of his life with moving and often hilarious results in this world premiere performed by LA's award-winning Ensemble Studio Theatre. For reservations or further info: call 213-368-9552

PRINCESS BEAN'S MESSY WORLD

April 29 - June 4 - Saturdays & Sundays, 2 pm
(no show on Sun., May 21) - \$10

By Rachel Resnikoff and Eric Stephens Directed by Clare Carey

Rock out with your kids at this award-winning rock-and-roll show/musical comedy about an "imperfect" princess who follows her heart rather than the rules. Full of funk, rock-and-roll, and powerful messages of self-esteem and self-celebration. For more info, visit www.princess-bean.com

For reservations, call 310-823-0710 and press 3#

OFFERING

May 12 & 13 - Friday-Saturday 8 pm

Join spontaneous movement and sound artist Cass Phelps telling a spiraling spherical tale from the now. Performance in our dance studio space on Friday and in our theatre on Saturday. For reservations or further info: call 310-862-4697

MS. SPELLINGS OF BE

May 18 & 21 - Thursday, 8 pm & Sunday, 6 pm only - \$12 general, \$8 students (with ID)

Created and Performed by Nicole Finis Smith Directed by Rennie Harris

Ms. Spellings of Be is a solo dance theatre piece about a child who is born into modern day society embodying a spirit of the ancients. The story interweaves spoken word poetry, comedic character play, and dance in the consciousness of hip-hop. Includes additional modern dance ensemble performance and post-performance reception with the hip-hop group ELEVATORS. For reservations or further info: call 310-823-0710 and press 4#

TRIBALJAZZ featuring John Densmore

Friday-Sat., May 19-20, 8pm - \$25

Founding member of The Doors, John Densmore, brings his world/jazz ensemble, Tribaljazz, to the Lodge for two nights. Watch this space for more details to follow or visit

<http://www.myspace.com/tribaljazzdensmore!>

For reservations, call 310-823-0710 and press 5#



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Comm-unity
Events

Pacific Resident Theatre THE CO-OP OF PACIFIC RESIDENT THEATRE PRESENTS

Shakespeare's **RICHARD THE SECOND**
3 actors 75 minutes! adapted by Tom Beyer directed by Tony Pasqualini with: Molly Schaffer, Alexander Enberg, Tom Beyer May 6 - May 21

Opening weekend: May 6th (Sat) 8PM May 7th (Sun) 3PM Then two more weekends (May 11-21): Thurs, Fri, Sat at 8PM Sat at 5PM (bonus matinees!) Sun 3PM Closes May 21 (Sun)

Venice Garden Tour The 12th annual Venice Garden and Home Tour will take place on Saturday May 6.

The Venice Garden and Home Tour is an annual event in Venice, California that showcases unusual and delightful homes and gardens that exemplify the creative and original tastes of their owners, as well as the talents of local designers.

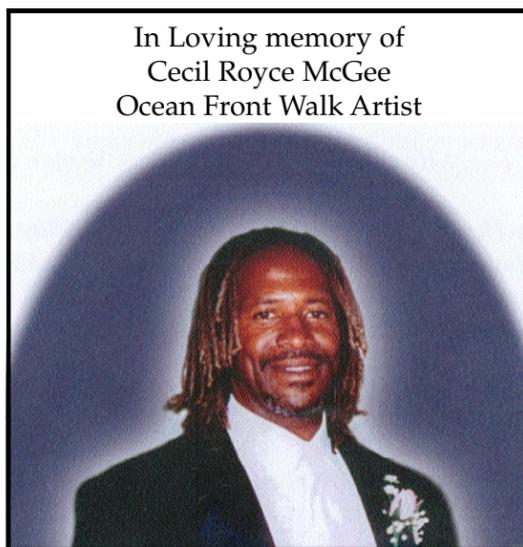
Fundraising event to benefit the Neighborhood Youth Association's Las Doradas Children's Center. NYA was founded in 1906 by the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles and has enhanced the lives of thousands of "at risk" children. <http://www.venicegardentour.org/>

PARLOR PERFORMANCES@STEINWAY HALL

**8pm Sat., May 20. Award-winning monologists VICKI JUDITZ and SCOTT CARTER

** 8pm Wed., May 24 * KAREN BENJAMIN & ALAN CHAPMAN's Cole Porter show!

** 8:30pm Sat., June 3 * Singing Political Satirist Roy Zimmerman & Investigative Satirist PAUL KRASSNER! 12121 W. Pico Bl.471-3979 or e-mail frankent1@juno.com



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MAY CALENDAR

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Wednesday, May 3 ... **Land Use & Planning Committee** - 6:30 PM at Westminster Elementary School Auditorium. Evaluate projects submitted for review and general land use issues.

Thursday, May 4 ... **Budget & Finance Committee** - 8:30 AM at Extra Space Storage. Develop 2006-07 budget.

Friday, May 5 ... **Ocean Front Walk Committee** - 8:00 AM at Oakwood Recreation Center. Review, monitor and evaluate implementation of Ocean Front Walk Ordinance.

Monday, May 8 ... **Executive Committee** - 7:00 PM at Extra Space Storage. Develop agenda for Board of Officers meeting.

Tuesday, May 16 ... **BOARD OF OFFICERS** - 7:00 PM at Westminster Elementary School Auditorium. The Board will address community issues brought by stakeholders and committees to the Executive Committee meeting.

Thursday, May 18 ... **Education Committee** - 7:00 PM at Venice Family Clinic. Work on education issues and strategies.

Thursday, May 18 ... **Communications & Outreach Committee** - 7:00 PM at Vera Davis McClendon Center.

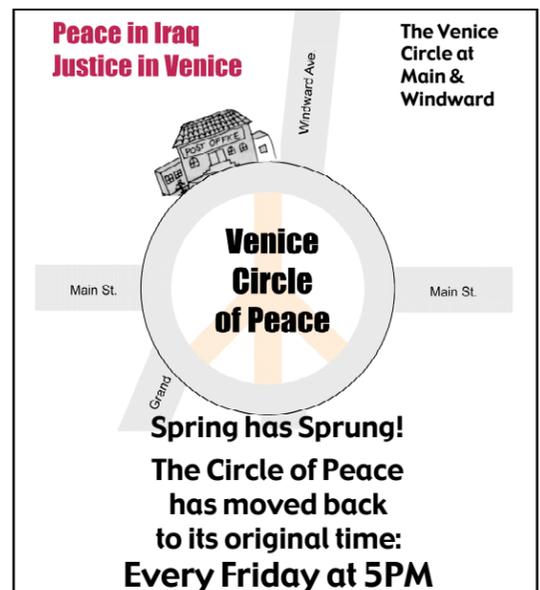
Wednesday, May 24 ... **Land Use & Planning Committee** - 6:30 PM. Venice High School Cafeteria. Evaluate projects submitted for review and general land use issues.

Thursday, May 25 ... **Disaster Preparedness Committee** - 7:00 PM at Vera Davis McClendon Center. Disaster Preparedness event planning and community organization.

To Be Determined ... **Overnight Parking District Committee** - Develop and implement procedures for determining areas of Venice that would like to participate in the overnight parking permit program.

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Venice Circle of Peace

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Every Friday at 5PM



Nobel Women's Initiative – Building Peace

By Suzanne Thompson

On April 9, Nobel Peace Laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi and Betty Williams came to Los Angeles for their first full planning meeting for the Nobel Women's Initiative: Working Together for Peace with Justice (NWI). These Nobel Peace Laureates, along with 2004 Laureate Wangari Maathai (Kenyan environmentalists) are founders of a new initiative to support women's rights around the world. It is the first time in history that Laureates of Peace have created their own organization that uses their Nobel voices to advance peace.

One element of the work will be to sponsor a meeting of women every two years, in a different region of the world, hosted by the Nobel Laureate of that region to highlight issues of concern to women in that part of the world. Mindful of not duplicating the work of existing organizations, the Laureates want this initiative to supplement and enhance the work by networking, sharing information and ideas to provide new ground for discussion, debate and change. A director has been hired as well as an associate via the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work internship program. The Laureates have put together a working group of women activists and academics to assist their efforts.

Flying in the next day to meet with the Laureates was 1992 Nobel Peace Laureate, Guatemalan human rights activist Rigoberta Menchú. Active in Central America solidarity movements of the 80's, I was very familiar with the work of some of the Laureates. Actor/activists Edward Asner introduced me to Jody Williams when she was the Deputy Director of the Los Angeles based Medical Aid for El Salvador. And, I was well aware of the horrific human rights abuses, especially against the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. Menchú, a Mayan Indian, grew up during the civil war, and fled her homeland in 1981 after her father, mother and brothers were killed by Guatemalan government security forces.

The Nobel Prize is an international award given yearly since 1901 for achievements in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and for peace. In 1968, the Bank of Sweden instituted the Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel, founder of the Nobel Prize. The Prize Winners are announced in October every year. They receive their awards (a

prize amount, a gold medal and a diploma) on December 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death.

Betty Williams was recognized with the Peace Prize in 1976 for her work to bring peace in her native Northern Ireland, a country at war for over 850 years. In the 30 years since her award, she has devoted her life to creating a movement to begin the reversal of thinking on how we deal with the injustices, cruelty and horror perpetrated on the world's children. "In a world that we know can feed itself, upwards of 40,000 children die every day from conditions of malnutrition. Surely we must question why we are allowing this carnage to continue. Thirty years in the field has convinced me of one thing, the obvious fact that there are no answers from the top down. Governments do not have the answers. A lot of times they are the problem. If we are committed to helping our world's children, then we must begin to create solutions from the bottom up" said Mrs. Williams. A city of compassion and peace, where children are treated with dignity, respect and love is the result of Betty Williams many years of work in Italy. World Centers of Compassion for Children International is building the first City of Compassion for children in south Italy in the region Basilicata.

American Jody Williams received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her work as the coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Organizer and activist, teacher and writer, she is an internationally recognized speaker on the power of individuals to bring about dramatic change in the world. In 1992, Jody served as founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and oversaw the growth of the coalition to over 1,300 organizations working together from 95 countries to eliminate antipersonnel landmines. Working in an unprecedented cooperative effort with governments, UN bodies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), she served as chief strategist and spokesperson for the ICBL as it achieved its goal of an international treaty banning antipersonnel landmines during a diplomatic conference held in Oslo in September 1997.

Human Rights activists and lawyer Shirin Ebadi, J.D. was awarded the Peace Prize in 2003 for her efforts to promote human rights, in particular, the rights of women, children, and political prisoners in

Iran. She is the first Muslim woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and only the fifth Muslim to receive a Nobel Prize in any field. She was the first female Judge in Iran and served as President of the City Court of Tehran from 1975 to 1979. She, along with other woman judges, was dismissed from that position after the Islamic Revolution in February 1979. As a lawyer, she has taken on many controversial cases defending political dissidents and as a result has been imprisoned numerous times. She is also a university professor. "I know several Israeli NGO's that help Palestinians. It's the governments that fight. In a country with over 2 million Iranians it is time to tell Bush to stop the differences" said Dr. Ebadi. Her memoir, *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope*, will be published by Random House in May 2006.

2004 Laureate Wangari Maathai, unable to attend the meeting, has played a leading global role for canceling the backlogged, non-repayable debts of poor African countries. She introduced the idea of ordinary people planting trees and developed the idea into a broad-based, grassroots organization called the "Green Belt Movement" which was launched in 1977 and grew into a Pan-African Green Belt Network. She has helped plant 30 million trees on farms, schools and church compounds across Kenya. Her recent campaign against "land grabbing" (illegal appropriation of public lands by unscrupulous developers) and the "re-allocation" of forest land has received much attention in Kenya and the region. In 2003, President Mwai Kibaki appointed her Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya's ninth Parliament, a position she currently holds. She is internationally recognized for her persistent struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation.

Only 12 women in the more than 100 years of history of the Nobel Peace Prize have been so recognized. Today, there are 7 women Nobel Peace Prize Laureates representing much of the world. It is amazing and inspiring what can happen when women from different countries, economic backgrounds, cultures and a variety of experiences, come together for the benefit of so many. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet these women doing some of the most important work in the world – building peace.