



# SANTA MONICA CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOL 7 No 2

ENSURING THAT THE PAST HAS A FUTURE  
JUNE 2009

## PARTY TIME AT THE BEACH HOUSE



Bringing history to life: Karen Teliha as architect Julia Morgan, Don Yanan as mogul William Randolph Hearst and Julia Denholm as actress Marion Davies. Photo by Dick Orton

by Carol Lemlein

The Santa Monica Conservancy celebrated the opening of the Annenberg Community Beach House with a premiere party on Saturday, May 9. Crowds of party-goers enjoyed the live jazz band, food and wine at the site where Marion Davies and W. R. Hearst hosted their famous parties in the 1920s and '30s.

For most guests, this was their first opportunity to explore the site and to learn about it from some of the Conservancy's expert Beach House docents. Stationed in the restored Guest House and outside on the Garden Terrace, the docents shared their knowledge and enthusiasm for the site.

The event sponsors were Pankow, Preservation Arts and Spectra Company, three companies instrumental in aspects of the site's restoration and construction.

The Annenberg Foundation – which made the generous and instrumental donation of \$27.5 million that enabled the historic beachfront Marion Davies estate to be reborn as a public beach club – was presented with

the Santa Monica Conservancy's President's Award. In making the presentation, SMC President Carol Lemlein said, "We are delighted to give this award to the Annenberg Foundation, whose visionary support, under the leadership of Wallis Annenberg, has revitalized this historic treasure and turned it into an asset for the entire community." Accepting the award was Leonard Aube, Managing Director of the Annenberg Foundation.



SMC President Carol Lemlein, Leonard Aube and Conservancy Board member Joel Brand, chair of Friends of 415 PCH which rallied public support for the Beach House proposal.

## TRAINING THE BEACH HOUSE DOCENTS

by Ruthann Lehrer

The Santa Monica Conservancy's most ambitious educational program kicked off in March with the training of the first Annenberg Community Beach House docents. Four Saturday afternoons in March were devoted to a lecture series covering the major interpretive themes for the site: Three Remarkable Individuals: W.R. Hearst, Marion Davies and Julia Morgan; A Beach Like No Other; and A Public Place Henceforth. A tremendous public response to the call for volunteers brought 100 potential docents to the lecture room at Ken Edwards Center. In April, docent trainees attended on-site sessions in preparation for the grand opening weekend on April 24 – 26. The first docent class graduated 70 volunteers who are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and dedicated to educating the public about the rich history and transformations of the Beach House.



Left to right: Brett Nock, Eileen Kawas, Farrokh Allen, Bruria Finkel, Ruthann Lehrer, Beverly Jones.

The Conservancy is very grateful to the lecturers at the training classes: Nancy O'Neill, Conservancy board member and former chief reference librarian at Santa Monica Public Library; Cari Beauchamp, Hollywood historian and author; Marc Wanamaker, founder of Bison Archives and Hollywood historian; Taylor Coffman, historian and archivist; Kay Pattison, Conservancy volunteer and docent; Ed Tarvyd, ecology instructor at Santa Monica College; Henri Blits, public speaking consultant; Christy McAvoy, Historic Resources Group;

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## THE CONSERVANCY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our board comes from neighborhoods throughout the city and includes:

Carol Lemlein, President  
 Susan McCarthy, Vice President  
 David Kaplan, Secretary  
 Tom Cleys, Treasurer  
 Marcello Vavala, Past President

Joel Brand  
 Ken Breisch  
 Bruce Cameron  
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 Nina Fresco  
 Sherrill Kushner  
 Ruthann Lehrner  
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### MEMBERSHIP DUES

Individual Membership	\$35
Household Membership	\$45
Low Income Membership	\$15
Sustaining Membership	\$100
Supporting Membership	\$250

To support the Conservancy at higher levels, or with a business membership, call (310) 496-3146.

### THE NEWS STAFF

Alice Allen      Dick Orton  
 Ruthann Lehrner      Nina Fresco  
 Sherrill Kushner      Judy Parsons  
 Margaret Bach      Nancy O'Neill  
 Marcello Vavala

### HOW TO CONTACT THE SANTA MONICA CONSERVANCY

Phone us at  
**(310) 496-3146**  
 -and leave a message.

Website [www.smconservancy.org](http://www.smconservancy.org).

E-mail [info@smconservancy.org](mailto:info@smconservancy.org)

Mail address: Santa Monica Conservancy  
 P.O.Box 653, Santa Monica, CA 90406



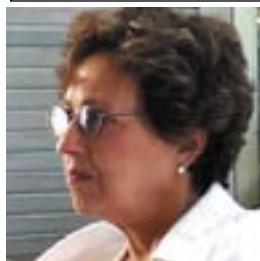
## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Carol Lemlein

May was National Preservation Month, and what a month it was for us here in Santa Monica! We celebrated the opening of the Annenberg Community Beach House – a wonderful example of adaptive reuse and sustainability - and our partnership with the City to offer the new docent program - with a fabulous dessert reception at the Beach House. Then, at the end of the month, we held “Santa Monica Landscapes,” the first tour of garden environments offered by the Conservancy.

These events are significant, not only because they bring us together to learn about our architectural and cultural heritage, but also because they engage more of our community in our conversations about places that matter. In this economic downturn, when development is slowed, it is important that we continue to build awareness and support for making preservation and adaptive reuse a civic priority and a key part of discussions about sustainable Santa Monica.

*Carol*



Margaret Bach



Nancy O'Neill



Frederick Fisher

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The News is very happy to welcome two additions to our staff: Margaret Bach, who reports on the Landmarks Commission, and Nancy O'Neill, who profiled bodybuilder Relna Brewer McRae. Also in this edition, Frederick Fisher presents the Annenberg Community Beach House from his perspective as a creative force behind the new public beach facility.

**CITY PHOTO QUIZ.** Do you know where this was? See page 7 for the answer.



Photo courtesy of the Santa Monica Library Image Archives Collection



## VOLUNTEER PROFILE

**HERS IS A LOVE AFFAIR WITH SANTA MONICA** by Judy Parsons

Photo by Ballerini

It was Santa Monica Conservancy member Kitty Bartholomew who introduced Phyllis Conkle to the Conservancy in 2007. As a true “born in Santa Monica” native, Phyllis is proud to call Santa Monica home. (Although, she did spend time in Ohio and Washington, D.C.) Santa Monica has been home again for the past 24 years.

As a member of the program committee, Phyllis adds a creative flair to the Conservancy’s special events. She has had a hand in the successes of our holiday open houses, the Don Bachardy lecture, the Santa Monica landscapes tour and the Annenberg Beach House extravaganza. “Volunteering at these events is particularly exciting and rewarding, because it gives me a chance to talk to our guests about our wonderful organization.”

“The Conservancy gives me and the other Conservancy members the opportunity to educate Santa Monica residents about the treasures that exist in all our neighborhoods. Through the program committee I’m getting to know our city’s residents and share what our organization is all about. I’m most interested in saving ‘significant’ buildings from the wrecking ball. Preserving our history is so important. The Conservancy also provides the community the opportunity to visit these treasures.”

Phyllis and her husband John live in an original 1929 Spanish Colonial. Phyllis, who has a degree in theatre (costume design), and her husband of 35 years raised four children who have since “moved out,” giving Phyllis time for the Conservancy. Lucky us!

**ANNENBERG COMMUNITY BEACH HOUSE** by Frederick Fisher

The Annenberg Community Beach House project was an inspiring opportunity for me on several levels. The site provided a rare combination of a dramatic natural setting, significant historic, cultural, and architectural assets, and a public space of regional importance. On a personal level, Santa Monica Beach has been a part of my life for 35 years, and I grew up in a neighborhood with a beach house that was designed by my father, who also was an architect.

My office was charged with meeting three goals for the site – restoration of the historic pool and deck, rehabilitation of the landmark guest house, and transformation of the site to serve new recreational and community uses. Input came from many sources, starting with Wallis Annenberg’s vision, and included a broad range of community meetings,

governing agencies and direction from the Santa Monica Community & Cultural Services Department which operates the site.

The new complex consists of an entry pavilion adjacent to Back On The Beach restaurant, a new Pool House with an overlook terrace, an event house with community rooms, and the restored Guest House. A series of gardens, one with a Roy McMakin sculpture, and activity areas are linked along a walkway evocative of the 1921 surf line. A colored concrete wall unifies the buildings and protects the site from highway noise.

The design offers the site as a canvas for the wide variety of activities that will naturally evolve as the community embraces the Annenberg Community Beach House. Activities range from casual and personal moments, to sports, poolside lounging, and formal group celebrations. Its success will reside

in the experiences that people create there.

Frederick Fisher and Partners is a leading architecture and planning firm serving a spectrum of cultural, institutional, commercial, and residential clients throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. Founded in 1982, principal Frederick Fisher and partners David Ross and Joseph Coriary pursue a unique interpretation of space, light and material in a contextually sensitive aesthetic that has won the firm international recognition for innovative and refined style.

**DOCENT TRAINING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

John Berley, Fred Fisher & Partners, Architects.

Special kudos to our videographer, Connie Kail of California Legal Video. Connie volunteered to be a docent, but in addition she videotaped every training class with her professional equipment, donating her services. The resulting DVDs helped volunteers catch up if they had to miss a class, and also created a permanent record of the outstanding lectures.

Now the Annenberg Community Beach House is open daily for public use. Free, docent-guided tours are available daily from June through August. In September, tours are offered on weekends and on Monday, Thursday and Friday. No advance reservations required for the tours. More information on the tour schedule, site use, fees and parking is available at the City’s website:

[beachhouse@smgov.net](mailto:beachhouse@smgov.net).

Click on “beachstories” for a fascinating pathway into the interpretive program.



Photo provided by Frederick Fisher



# SUMMER PRESERVATION EVENTS: HOME TOURS, STREET NAMES AND, YES, SKATEBOARDING HISTORY



**Go Skateboarding Day**  
Saturday, June 20  
2 pm

Santa Monica Public Library,  
MLK Jr. Auditorium  
601 Santa Monica Boulevard, SM, CA 90406

(310) 458-8600

As a prelude to the California Heritage Museum's upcoming exhibit, "Skateboard: Art & Evolution," the Library screens two legendary skateboarding movies: "Skaterdater," and "Dogtown and Z-Boys," featuring Santa Monica area skaters who changed skateboarding in the 1970s. Free

<http://www.smpl.org/June2009Calendar.pdf>



**2009 Architectural & Historical Home Tour**  
Saturday, June 27  
see website for time

Redondo Beach Historical Society  
P.O. Box 978  
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

(310) 372-0197

Tour includes four landmark properties, a church celebrating its 100th anniversary, a large Craftsman home never before on the tour and a contemporary Craftsman, as well as activities at Heritage Court. See website for details and reservation information.

<http://www.redondbeachhistorical.org/hometour.html>



**2009 Alhambra Historic Home Tour**  
Sunday, June 28  
11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Alhambra Preservation Group  
P.O. Box 1332, Alhambra,  
CA 91802-1332

(626) 755-3467

Self-guided walking tour showcasing six homes in the original Alhambra and Orange Blossom Manor Tracts in picturesque northeastern Alhambra. Norman Rockwell's 1930s art studio loft open for viewing. Tickets: \$15 in advance, \$18 at the event

[http://alhambrapreservation.org/APGsite/events/2009\\_Tour/2009tour.htm](http://alhambrapreservation.org/APGsite/events/2009_Tour/2009tour.htm)



**Paving the Way:**  
The Stories behind the Names of L.A.'s Streets  
Weekends, July 11-September 30  
2-4 pm

Heritage Square Museum  
3800 Homer Street  
Los Angeles, California 90031

(323) 225-2700

For nearly two centuries L.A.'s movers and shakers have named streets after themselves, family members, or associates. Hear the fascinating stories of their accomplishments and their legacy. See website for ticket information.

<http://www.heritagesquare.org>



**Old Pasadena Walking Tour**  
August 1  
9:00 - 11:00 am

Pasadena Heritage  
651 South Saint John Avenue  
Pasadena, California 91105-2913

(626) 441-6333

Tours include a slide presentation and a 90-minute guided walk. Old Pasadena is a National Register Historic District and is one of the best examples of downtown revitalization in the country. Tickets - \$10. Reservations required.

<http://www.pasadenaheritage.org>



**Richard Neutra, Architect: Sketches & Drawings**  
Through September 6  
Open during regular library hours

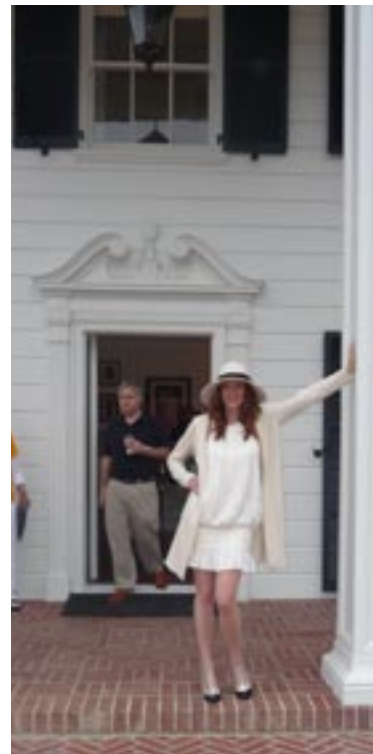
Los Angeles Public Library, Central Library,  
Getty Gallery  
630 W. Fifth St., Los Angeles, CA 90071

(213) 228-7000

Travel sketches, figure drawings and building renderings illustrating Neutra's skill in traditional notions of composition combined with innovative techniques of architectural representation. Free.

<http://www.lapl.org/events/neutra/index.html>

## THE ANNENBERG PARTY



## THOSE WHO MADE THE MAY 9TH PARTY WONDERFUL

**VOLUNTEERS**

Julie Berger  
Laurie Brenner  
Phyllis Conkle  
Dwight Flowers  
Sherrill Kushner  
Ruthann Lehrer  
Kara Litzelfelner  
Diane Locklear  
Jeff Maguire  
Nancy O'Neill  
Dick Orton (photographer)  
Thomasine Rogas  
Ruth Shari

**SPONSORS**

Pankow  
Preservation Arts  
Spectra Company

**DOCENTS**

Ron Accosta  
Ansley Allen  
Monika Bialas  
Julia Denholm (as Marion Davies)  
Moonie Fishburn  
Christina Hildebrand  
Connie Kail  
Shirlene Love  
Evelyn Maggiore  
Mary Moran  
Kay Pattison  
Vicky Talbot  
Julie Tomlinson  
Oscar Vizcarra

**MUSIC**

Santa Monica High School Jazz Ensemble

## THANKS TO THOSE WHO MADE THE WINTER LECTURES SUCCESSFUL

**VENUE HOSTS:**

Ruskin Group Theater

**PROGRAM SPONSOR:**

Angel City Press

**AUTHORS/SPEAKERS:**

Tom Zimmerman  
Jim Harris

**VOLUNTEERS:**

Nancy O'Neill  
Ruth Shari  
Mary Ann Hays  
Julie Berger



## LANDMARKS COMMISSION REPORT



301 Ocean Avenue at the corner of San Vicente,  
Photo by Dick Orton

By Margaret Bach

### 301 OCEAN AVENUE

After a lengthy process that spanned more than half a year and generated a high level of community interest and controversy, the Landmarks Commission designated its newest landmark, the 47-unit apartment complex at 301 Ocean Avenue, on January 12, 2009.

The property, located at the southeast corner of Ocean Avenue and San Vicente Boulevard, is identified with the late Clo Hoover, the City's first female mayor and a prominent and influential political figure in Santa Monica. Mrs. Hoover and her husband Chester owned and lived in the complex from the time it was built in 1952 until her death in 1997.

This designation was a first for Santa Monica: a landmark designated solely on its association "with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history." This criterion is one of six in the ordinance that also includes cultural, social, architectural, historical and aesthetic criteria. A property must meet at least one designation criterion to be eligible for landmarks designation.

The designation was approved by a narrow 4-3 vote, despite a City staff report that recommended a denial of the Landmark application – not the first time the Commission has made an independent assessment of eligibility, based on its own study and interpretation of the evidence. The current owner of the property, developer Trammell Crow Company, has filed an appeal to City

Council, scheduled, as of press time, for June 9.

### AND...COMING UP:

The City's updated Historic Resources Inventory will soon be released to the public. This comprehensive update has identified numerous potential landmarks and historic districts, partly due to the expansion of the timeline of the survey to 1968. The inventory will be an exciting planning tool for the City and the community, especially as the LUCE (Land Use and Circulation Element) process moves toward conclusion later this year. The Landmarks Commission continues to provide input to City staff to ensure that preservation and neighborhood conservation are prominent as core values and strategies in the City's future planning.



## RELNA BREWER MCREA: CONSERVANCY MEMBER, SANTA MONICA TREASURE

by Nancy O'Neill

Photos by Robert Riordan  
and Relna Brewer McRea.

"Some people made fun of us, and the doctors said we'd ruin our bodies." Petite, pretty Relna Brewer McRea and her female friends at Muscle Beach faced such criticism, but the thousands who came to Muscle Beach to enjoy their athletic feats disagreed.

Relna and her friends had the courage to carry on and became part of Santa Monica and physical culture history. Now she laughs and says that despite medical opinion, she has three children, is a healthy eighty-plus-year-old, and none of her beach friends have ever died of heart attacks.

Badly burned in a childhood accident, Relna began frequenting the beach at her brother's

suggestion as a way to stretch her muscles and enjoy the sunshine and to help heal the scars. She soon became an accomplished gymnast, weightlifter, and featured performer at Muscle Beach. Her athleticism and good looks led to roles as a Hollywood stuntwoman and as double for Marilyn Monroe to decoy the paparazzi. Looking at photos of the lovely young Relna, it's easy to see how the press was fooled.

Today Relna remembers that the best thing about her beach experience was her close-knit group and the friendships they developed. Although they didn't realize they were the role models for today's toned and healthy young men and women, it was one of their most important contributions.



Now retired to the San Diego area, Relna says that she still does calisthenics but often prefers sewing, especially the costumes she creates for the oversized dolls that decorate her quarters. And she still keeps a pair of 10-pound dumbbells beside her bed!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- |                           |                        |                                |                           |                        |                                       |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Garland and Farrokh Allen | Naila Elfarra          | John and Lindsey Hinds         | Steve Loperand            | George Ptucha          | Richard Steele                        |
| Liz and Dale Bell         | Margi Falk             | Bob and Jean Ann Holbrook      | Lucie Hill                | Linda Renaud *         | Achee Stevenson                       |
| Tanya Brokaw              | Moonie Fishburn        | Ms. Shannon Holt               | Patricia and Cory Mahler  | Jim and Jennifer Ries  | Kimberly and Loriann Stevenston-Smith |
| Barbara Bryan             | Victoria Foote         | Jean and William Hulse         | Jeffrey Alan Marks        | Mark Robbins           | Terry Tegnazian and Scott Whittle     |
| Margaret Buchheit         | Susan Freeman          | Dorothy Jewell                 | Lana McNally              | Hillary Rollins        | Oscar Vizcarra, Jr                    |
| Judith Castle             | Jeff & Gisela Friedman | Eileen Kawas and Al Swarts *   | Mary Moran                | Joanna Rosoff          | Brett Voris                           |
| Kasey Corso               | Fereydoon Ghaffari *   | Tom and Karon Larmore          | Tracey Muldaur            | Kimberly Shine *       |                                       |
| Brad and Anna Cox         | Sharon Gilpin          | Cheri Larson                   | Jacquie Nemor             | Monique Shultz *       |                                       |
| Lauren Martin Culp        | Mark Gorman            | Kisha Lawson                   | Joe Nicoletti             | Stuart Silverman       |                                       |
| Carole Currey             | Martha Gruft           | Deborah Levin and Glenn Harris | Dolly Nieman              | Constance Simmons-Kail |                                       |
| Richard Delamora          | Peyton Hall            |                                | Olympia Pachares          | Maria Sirotti          |                                       |
| Fred Deni                 | Bob Harris             |                                | Ann Payson and Alexa Ulin | Tom Soto               | * Sustaining or higher                |
| Steven Desouza            | Joanne Hartman         |                                | Amy E Powell              | Marlene St Peter       |                                       |

FROM PAGE 2

## CITY PHOTO QUIZ ANSWER



These photos are courtesy of the Santa Monica Library Image Archive. The caption on the archive reads: "Burning a derelect house on Belmar Place, between Main and Third Street, north of Pico". Actually the street isn't there anymore either. The land was cleared to make way for the Civic Auditorium and this shotgun house was burned July 1, 1953. The Santa Monica Conservancy is restoring the last remaining shotgun house as a Preservation Resource Center.

## BUSINESS MEMBERS

- Angel City Press
- David and Sandra Abrahams, Coldwell Banker\*
- Kate Bransfield, Coldwell Banker
- Pamela Burton & Company
- Julie Chambers L Ac
- Deasy Penner and Partners
- David Forbes Hibbert, AIA \*
- Aleks Istanbul Architects
- Keller Williams Realty Westside
- Moore, Ruble, Yudell
- Morley Builders \*
- Eric Natwig, New West Partners
- Pankow
- Mary Ann Powell, Pacific Park
- Preservation Arts
- Spectra Company
- John Strozdas, The Ambrose
- \* Sponsor Member or higher



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Business Members

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Preservation Resource Center  
Call for Volunteers

P.O. Box 653 SANTA MONICA, CA 90406-0653

## L.A. HERITAGE DAY



Santa Monica Conservancy volunteers Sarah Bernard (pictured), Tom Cleys, Nancy O'Neill and Carol Lemlein participated in the annual L. A. Heritage Day recently at the Heritage Square Museum in Pasadena. The event brought together many of the over 200 historical organizations, societies and museums throughout the greater Los Angeles area that are dedicated to preserving and promoting the region's heritage. The L.A. Heritage Alliance, host of the event, provides educational and networking opportunities for those organizations through quarterly meetings and a website at [laheritage.blogspot.com](http://laheritage.blogspot.com).

## CREATING A LIBRARY FOR OUR PRESERVATION RESOURCE CENTER

We are now collecting materials for a small library in the Preservation Resource Center at the Shotgun House. If you, your friends or neighbors have any materials relating to Santa Monica history, local architecture, and preservation techniques that you would like to donate, please send email to [info@smconservancy.org](mailto:info@smconservancy.org) or call 310-496-3146. We will arrange to store them until the Center is ready to open and will provide you with a record of your donation. The first donation to the library was made by former member Carol Agate who donated several books on Santa Monica history to the Conservancy before she moved to Boston earlier this year.

## JOIN THE PARADE! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED JULY 4TH MAIN ST. PARADE



Volunteers needed to join fellow SMC members walking the 4th of July Main St. Parade!  
Call 310-496-3146 or  
email: [rsvp@smconservancy.org](mailto:rsvp@smconservancy.org)