



# The Village Green Highlights

Fall 2005

## Hibiscus Emergency!

*Learn how you can help.*  
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Village Green Owners' Association  
5300 Rodeo Rd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90016  
<http://villagegreenla.net>

## Volunteer at the Village Green

*This is where we live—make it the best it can be*

Volunteers make the Village Green what it is. Decisions about everything from the landscape, to building maintenance, parking, the CC&Rs, historic landmark status, etc. are all made by a small network of volunteers on the Board of Directors and all of the committees. Did you know that some VG committees have as few as 3 or 4 members? The Village Green needs more residents to volunteer!

If you have opinions and ideas about how the VG should be run, the best way to make yourself heard is to come get involved in one of the committees.

Board President Barbara Washington feels the committees are essential for the board's operation: "The committees are our liason to the wider Village Green community. We rely on them to tell us about the day-to-day life in the Green."

You can volunteer at any level, from helping out occasionally to chairing a committee (or even running for the Board!). Each committee's activities

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## Travel Back in Time: The Flood of 1963

*Helen Spears moved into Baldwin Hills Village in 1942. She and her husband "Doc" lived in the same apartment in Court 8 for 50 years. Here we reprint her 1970s newsletter article.*

### The Dam Breaks

It is Saturday, December 14, 1963.

On the way to Flavio's Beauty Shop in the Baldwin Hills Arcade, I notice the La Brea Avenue gutters. They are running full of muddy water. The flow has no resemblance to the drainage usually running down the hill or to the larger one, which occurs when an outlet pipe from the Baldwin Hills Reservoir is serviced.

Workers have been checking a leak in the dam since yesterday—it seems to be enlarging. Periodically we get radio and television reports as to their findings.

The news is unnerving. During my hikes in the hills since the dam was placed in service in 1951, the sight of 292 million gallons of water in the reservoir lake behind a dirt-fill dam in somewhat geologically unstable land has seemed questionable. Oh well, "not to worry."

With curlers in place, I am sitting under the dryer when the bull horns start sounding their urgent message to evacuate the area. A cordon of slightly less than 100 motorcycle officers has assembled in the parking area

*- continued on page 4*



## ***At the Beach House***, a play by Aram Saroyan October 21–November 27, 2005 at The Lost Studio

We're fortunate at the Green to live among a variety of talented artists. One of these, our neighbor Aram Saroyan, is an acclaimed writer with many credits to his name. His current project is a play entitled *At the Beach House*, which will open at The Lost Studio on Oct. 21, 2005 for a six-week limited engagement.

Aram has a special talent for writing about family situations in a clear, honest and heartfelt manner, as evidenced in his book, *Last Rites*, which is about the death of his father. I was introduced to his writing and his family through this very compelling piece of work. Having just finished *Last Rites*, I'm eager to see his new play, which further examines family dynamics under interesting, unusual, and difficult circumstances. *At the Beach House* is a fictional piece, but characters and events are taken from life. The play takes us deep into the movie-star world that, as the son of writer William Saroyan and the stepson of Walter Matthau, Aram can comment on in a first hand, unique way. His insider knowledge of the Hollywood scene and its players informs an unforgettable family portrait in a play that is at times harrowing, at other times funny.

The play stars Orson Bean and Alanna Ubach, the remarkable young actress seen most recently in *Meet the Fockers*. Eight other talented actors fill out the large ensemble. To quote Aram, "The playwright's greatest allies are actors, and I've been blessed with a fantastic cast and a wonderful director."  
- Laurie Liles



The play runs October 21st through November 27th. Fridays and Saturdays 8:00 p.m.; Sundays, 7:00 p.m.  
Tickets \$20.00; \$15.00 for seniors, students and previews (Oct. 18, 19 and 20)  
Tickets available at 323-960-7721 or online, [www.plays411.com](http://www.plays411.com).

"The Lost Studio" is at 130 S. LaBrea (between First and Second Streets), Los Angeles, 90036. There is ample street parking.

advertisement

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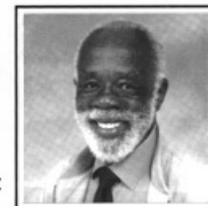
**West Area Neighborhood Council**

If you have expertise, or would like to participate in training, please contact Sheryl Dotson (Village Green resident and Neighborhood Council Representative) at 323.299.7377

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## Volunteer at the VG (continued from page 1)

are summarized below. Committee chairs have specified projects you may be interested in. Contact the committee chair, or just show up for a meeting! Contact information is available from the office, and in your VG phone directory.

Meeting days of the month and times are provided below. All committees meet in the clubhouse.

### **Budget & Finance Committee**

*Gina Tramel, chair; 2nd Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m.*

Puts together variance reports, and helps prepare the yearly budget for the VGOA. Anyone interested is welcome. If you can balance your checkbook, you can help the budget committee.

### **Clubhouse Committee**

The committee needs a chairperson!

This committee manages use, maintenance and upkeep of the Clubhouse.

### **Communications Ad Hoc Committee**

*Susan Edwards, chair; 3rd Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m.*

Publishes *Highlights* quarterly and has recently taken on the task of managing content on the VGOA's Web site, <http://villagegreenla.net>. You don't have to attend meetings to participate! We need residents to write articles of interest to VG residents for *Highlights*. We also need members with Web design experience (or interest in *learning* Web design), and experience setting up a Content Management System for a Web site.

### **Court Council**

*Kathryn Carr, chair; 1st Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m.*

Each court has a court council representative. The Council is the main liason between residents and the VGOA Board. Court Council helps residents and the board find solutions to various issues around the Green. You can find out who your representative is from the office, or on lists posted in the laundry rooms. Anyone can come to Court Council meetings; these meetings are one of the best ways to find out what is going on at the Green.

### **Cultural Affairs Committee**

*Molly O'Brien, chair; 1st Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m.*

Puts on various events throughout the year, such as the summer concerts and the Art Show. They currently need volunteers to help with the upcoming children's Halloween Party, and the Easter Egg hunt. Parents of children who want to attend these events are encouraged to volunteer.

### **Cultural Landscape Committee**

*Ted Lumpkin, chair; 4th Mondays of the month, 7:00 p.m.*

The committee is undergoing the awesome task of

inventorying every shrub and bush on VG property for the "Cultural Landscape Report," the first step towards a maintenance plan for the future of the VG's historic landscape, and possible funding. The committee is *in desperate need of people for their Saturday morning survey team*, which walks small areas of the Green at a time, slowly cataloging all of the plants. Show up on Saturdays, between 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Meet in Court 7, near unit #5422.

### **Design Review Committee**

*Kathleen Louw, chair; 1st Mondays of the month, 7:30 p.m.*

Oversees all architectural changes to the structures on the Green. DRC develops the architectural guidelines for the VG Handbook, advises the board and writes policies on proposed renovations (including plumbing) to individual units and common spaces. DRC is heavily involved in the painting and plumbing projects. The committee needs help digitizing building plans and creating electronic working tools and needs help from volunteers with AutoCad knowledge. Input from architects, licensed plumbers and electricians interested in 1940s building issues, art historians, landscape artists, and interior designers is welcomed.

### **Grant Ad Hoc Committee**

*Robert Nicolais and Susan Edwards, co-chairs;*

*2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month, 8:00 p.m.*

Develops grant proposals and writes grants for initiatives across the Green. Seeks input from committees about grant opportunities, or projects in need of funding. Most opportunities are connected to VG's historic status. Volunteers with grant-writing experience are encouraged to get involved, but this experience is not necessary.

### **Landscape Committee**

*Lorraine Secor, chair; 2nd Mondays of the month, 7:30 p.m.*

Oversees maintenance of the Green's landscape. Representatives report problems, which then go to the Board, the Manager, and to Bennett Landscaping. Ideally, one representative in each court would look out for issues. Projects include maintenance of the rose gardens, installing an irrigation system and new plants on the Rodeo median, and mulching. Anyone interested in plants should join the committee. *continued next page.....*

**Volunteer at VG**

*Continued from previous page.*

**National Landmark Committee**

*Robert Nicolais, chair; meets 2nd Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.*

Formed of the chairs of VG committees. Has recently been working closely with the Cultural Landscape, Landscape, and Tree Committees to develop a Cultural Landscape Report of the historic shrubs and plants on the Green.

**Safety Committee**

*Steven Keylon, Chair; 3rd Mondays of the month, 7 p.m.*

Works with Allied/Barton patrol and the manager on public safety issues. We're evaluating lighting to identify broken lights and areas where light is lacking. Also monitoring Allied/Barton Security, and tracking incidents to identify patterns. A Safety Town Hall Meeting on October 22 will include LA City Police. This is a newly resurrected committee; new members are needed!

**Social Recreation**

*Priscilla Browner, chair; every Thursday, 11:30–3:00*

This recreation group meets in the clubhouse every week. Come by and join in the fun! A movie is screened every 4th Thursday at 1 p.m. Also distributes See's candy gift certificates (\$10 per lb.; a \$3.60 savings). Come by the clubhouse on Thursdays, or contact Priscilla Browner.

**Tree Committee**

*Gordon Brooks, chair; meets 3rd Mondays, 7:30 p.m.*

Oversees memorial trees, identification and renewal of dead trees, and restoration of trees on the 1940s Barlow landscape plan. Anyone interested in trees should join.

## Safety Committee Town Hall Meeting

Saturday, October 22, 2005  
10 a.m.

in the Clubhouse  
Los Angeles Police Dept. is invited

## The Flood of 1963

*...continued from page 1*

around the Thriftmart [where Albertson's is now] and begun going house to house throughout the hills and lower areas warning people to leave.

Patrons in the beauty shop are becoming increasingly restless. Hair still wet, I gather my belongings, implore other shop occupants to depart, and head for home. I find some of my neighbors departing. The man next door says he does not plan to leave, and calmly carries his waste basket to the trash yard. I have no time to try to be persuasive.

Quickly, I pack a suitcase with clothing for my husband and me. He is out somewhere Christmas shopping. Documents related to my job are gathered; Venetian blinds and inside doors are closed against the possible intrusion of water.

Where shall I go? La Brea is impassable. The Fedco corner [where Target is now] is too low-lying. Traffic is heavy. I remember the Washington Boulevard and La Brea intersection near my auto mechanic's shop is at a higher elevation. Circuitously, I arrive at Franc's Drive-in on the southwest corner, park my car, and run inside for the television report. It is 12:50 p.m. and helicopter observers give the dam just a few more minutes.

I run out to the parking lot where I have a full view of the dam at almost an equal elevation. Slowly at first, the water starts. Then the crumbling takes over and a huge water wheel cuts a V-shaped notch. A wall of water hits the first house on the east side of the canyon, which runs down Cloverdale Avenue. One by one each house is devoured. I watch this spectacle alternately outside in the parking lot, and inside on television where details are intimately shown by the helicopter camera.

Water roars down the canyon, bouncing off the east wall and engulfing houses on the opposite side. Continuing down the steep hill, the flood gains momentum and hits Coliseum Street at Cloverdale. At Duray Place it spreads out fan-like to cover almost all of Baldwin Hills Village. The flow runs in large volume to Rodeo Road and Hauser Boulevard, and into Ballona Creek. It swirls around Baldwin Hills School on the west and toward Santa Rosalia [St.] on the east.

A few hours later, only a sea of mud remains. Passage along Coliseum is no longer possible with both Duray and Cloverdale cut across to a depth of 15

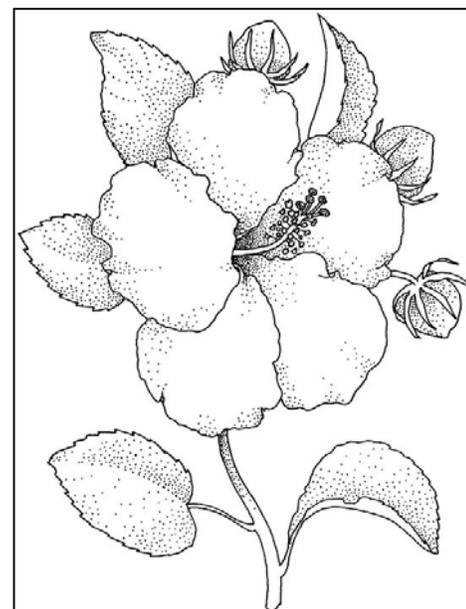
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## FROM THE GARDEN GURUS.....

### ***Help Save the Hibiscus – Adopt-A-Plant***

Calling all residents! SOP! SOP! (Save Our Plants). One of our most colorful plants in Village Green is in dire need of help. Hibiscus plants throughout the site are currently infested with Giant Whitefly. This pest has been in the L.A. basin since 1995 and here at the Green since 1997. Although several methods have been tried to eradicate it, to date nothing has had long-term success. Unfortunately, Whitefly is airborne and will move to other species of plants. If a plant gets too heavily infested, it should be removed; its color and beauty lost forever. To prevent such losses, the Landscape Committee is starting a volunteer "Adopt-a-Plant" program for interested residents. How can you help? Easily.....

1. Identify the plant (or plants) you want to save and let us know its location so you can be credited for your care. Tell us the court number, the address of the unit it is closest to and whether it is in front (F) or on the patio side (P) of the unit. To identify Whitefly, look for white furry edges on leaves, white larvae on the back of leaves, or thick thread-like white waxy filaments that look like a beard hanging from the leaf.
2. Cut off all leaves that are infested, even if there are very few leaves left on the branches.
3. Pour a bucket of water at the base of the plant, as many days a week as you can, to hydrate it. Once a month put down a slow-release pellet fertilizer (not *Miracle Gro*; *Oscomote* is a good brand) in order to give the plant much-needed nutrients.
4. If you have a hose nearby, spray the leaves daily with a heavy stream of water until all Whitefly is gone.



*Hibiscus*

This is an ongoing project. The Whitefly will come back periodically, but if we continually groom our plants, wash them with water and feed them, we stand a chance of saving them. The Landscape Committee is offering a prize to the resident whose plant(s) shows the most improvement over a 90-day period. Take before-and-after pictures and submit them to the committee.

\*\*\*\*\*

During the fall months, trees drop many leaves and spiders are busy spinning webs everywhere, covering plants, hedges, etc. throughout the Green. Our landscapers can't keep up with the volume of litter that drops every day, so we hope you will volunteer to get some arm exercise by brushing these into the area beds. This bit of housekeeping will keep our plants healthier and looking better.

\*\*\*\*\*

We will be posting volunteer opportunities in each edition of *Highlights*. Watch in the January issue for new ways to get involved. If you have other suggestions of ways that residents can help, please turn them into the office or call 293-6657 or 295-9209. Better yet, join us at a Landscape Committee meeting on the second Monday of each month at 7:30pm in the Clubhouse and give us your input.

L. Secor/L. Liles

## The MILLS ACT – A Visit to Villa Riviera

Would you like to see your property tax bill cut in half—or even more? Would you like the City of Los Angeles to effectively “pay” your monthly assessment bill? This could be a reality here at Village Green, if we choose to participate in the Mills Act. The Mills Act is a program for owners of historic properties, which gives the owners a tax break in exchange for continued preservation of that property. Owners who have bought their condos in the last five years or so could save thousands of dollars each year. Other owners can get the value of a lower tax base for resale.

The Grant Committee will be hosting several meetings for interested residents this fall in order to provide Mills Act information and show residents what their potential property tax savings might be. Dates will be announced soon.

On Saturday, September 17 a group of Village Green residents visited the Villa Riviera in Long Beach. The goal was to see how a historic condominium homeowner’s association had successfully navigated the Mills Act process, and what benefits or drawbacks they have identified.

The Villa Riviera, is on the National Register of Historic Places and has entered into a Mills Act contract with the City of Long Beach. Built in 1929, the single-building complex has about 135 units. The group from Village Green met with Ana Maria McGuan, former board member and active resident of the Villa Riviera. Ana Maria spearheaded the effort to obtain Mills Act status for the Villa Riviera. She provided firsthand information about the Mills Act, and how it can successfully be established here at Village Green.

Ana Maria stressed that entering into the Mills Act contract was a win/win situation for the Villa Riviera and its residents. Now that the entire process has been completed, she says there is no downside to it whatsoever. At the Villa Riviera, 78% of the residents there have

individual Mills Act contracts with the City of Long Beach.

Residents at the Villa Riviera had voiced concerns prior to entering the program, such as the fear that assessments would go up, or that the penalties would be too high if the terms of the contract weren’t met. Ana Maria reminded us that simply by paying the current monthly assessment, the residents were fulfilling their Mills Act obligation regarding maintenance and preservation. As long as the property didn’t become neglected, there would be no penalties. And assessments have not gone up.

She also pointed out that maintenance projects will happen, Mills Act or not. The building would have to be painted, plumbing and electrical would have to be updated, etc. Participating in the Mills Act essentially gives the residents a rebate on the money that goes to routine maintenance tasks. The Mills Act contract did not require the Association to do anything they are not already doing to maintain the property.

Villa Riviera residents are seeing savings in their property tax bills of 50% or more, depending on when they bought at the Villa, and how much they paid. Other residents who have been

there longer might not see much, if any savings, and they are not obligated to participate in the program. But many residents that may not see a savings now are also entering into Mills Act contracts because the lower tax assessment will transfer to the next owner when they sell. This becomes a strong selling point for prospective buyers because they can afford more with the lower property tax assessments. Owners who pass their property to their heirs are also passing on huge future tax savings.

Village Green residents could see these same benefits in the future, should we decide to participate in the Mills Act program. More information is available online, but please try to attend one of the Mills Act informational meetings this fall.

-Steven Keylon



*The Villa Riviera, built in 1929 on Long Beach’s waterfront, recently became a Mills Act property.*

## The Flood of 1963...continued

feet. Underground pipes are bent and hang suspended in the holes. Great chunks of concrete, parts of houses, autos, refrigerators, stoves, clothing, papers, an old organ with foot pedals, sofas... everything... lies scattered about.

Police Chief William Parker is glad he made the decision to evacuate the area. He took the initiative even though risking becoming a laughing stock later if his judgment proved wrong.

Communication becomes a great problem. Where is my husband? I try calling home. Telephones are working, but there is no answer. From the mechanic's I call Long Beach where our families live, to assure them of my safety, and to tell them to relay any call from my husband – but what if—? I dismiss that morbid thought.

The hours drag, fraught with news of the destruction. Finally, at 10 o'clock that night, a message comes with good news. My husband is safe in a home on Carmona Street on the hillside just east of La Cienega.

Water had overtaken him at the Fedco corner. He had no forewarning. Fearfully, he abandoned the car and attempted to climb a nearby telephone pole. Finding that unwise, he continued up the hill, clothing wet and muddy, and was taken into the home of a kind lady who gave him dry trousers and slippers. Later, a hot dinner was served to him and three other evacuees.

The mechanic's son offers to drive me to pick up my husband. We start out only to be turned back time after time by the impossibility of gaining traction on slippery streets. As we pass Ballona Creek, masses of debris and household articles float by. We find our way, fan-tailing up La Cienega to a road normally closed. We pass my husband's car, washed south from the intersection at Rodeo and La Cienega along with many other autos, and two truck operators offering to haul people out for exorbitant sums.

We reach our destination. At long last my husband and I are together and safe! We make our way back to my husband's blue station wagon and hitch it to the back of the car we are using. When we reach the garage, the mechanic and his son spend what remains of the night draining sludge from the body and engine. They rehabilitate the wagon, and today, after 240,000 miles, it is still going merrily along.

We spend the night in a Crenshaw Boulevard motel and try to return to the Village on foot the next day. We give up after falling time after time in the slippery clay-mud; it is two feet deep in places.

We try again the next morning when it has dried a little, going through a police block and proving our residence to get a pass in a command tent set up nearby. No one will be permitted into the area for some time except for residents. Sightseers are turned back and property protection is well organized.

When we reach home, we cannot enter until mud blocking the door is shoveled away. The patio is covered with sticky silt as are all the garage courts. We have parked some distance away. Inside the apartment, only two inches of mud covers the kitchen floor and a part of the dining room carpet. Water had come in the door only through the mail slot! Everything else is OK.

The next day we meet and escort a carpet man to take the sodden mess to be cleaned. Villagers have to vouch for all tradesmen and friends who enter.

The man next door who would not leave had remained with his wife in their three-bedroom apartment. Two policemen had come to encourage them to leave and were trapped by the onrush of water. The men carried the electric organ, antique furniture and a valuable glass collection upstairs. The officers were rescued later in the afternoon by a police helicopter that landed on the roof of their dining room. Their police vehicle had been washed away.

Searches are in progress for missing persons. One is found under a stack of automobiles and debris at the end of a Village garage court immediately below the canyon. Another is found in an apartment building. Three others are found drowned in an excavation on Rodeo Road. Only five lost! What a miracle! Chief Parker was right.

One friend was discovered perched on top of her piano in her downstairs apartment. She was rescued.

Many residents had absolutely nothing left and about 500 cars were "totaled" in the area. Thirty-nine police motorcycles and some patrol cars were lost as officers fled for safety on foot before the wall of water.

For several days, residents clean and wash articles, shovel mud, hire workers to help dig out courts and garages, and move belongings from homes flooded to ceilings and devoid of window glass. No looting occurs.

Soon the Army Corps of Engineers sets up headquarters nearby with trucks, skip loaders, scrapers, tractors, and efficient personnel. Rehabilitation has begun.

After six months, almost every apartment is refurbished and occupied. Landscaping has replaced mud. Most of the trees withstood the current and new grass and shrubs appear.

OUR VILLAGE LIVES AGAIN and later becomes VILLAGE GREEN.

## Incident Reports

**July 25** – resident reported men with two pick-up trucks were loitering, seemingly about to steal patio furniture. Resident contacted LAPD; the men and trucks left the property.

**Aug 2** – residents reported workers staring at them with lustful and unprofessional manner.

**Aug 28** – a man was taken into custody by LAPD for allegedly trying to break into his daughter's unit at Village Green. A family dispute may be involved.

**Aug 30** – a suspect was witnessed attempting to break into a car in Ct. 7. Suspect fled the property.

**Sept 3** – a car was reported broken into in Ct. 13. A resident reported her garage was broken into; items worth about \$100 were stolen.

**Sept 11** – resident reported a bike stolen from his patio. Another bike was reported stolen from Ct. 2 on Sept. 12.

**Sept 13** – a resident in Ct. 17 reported unit burglarized. Residents in Ct. 4 reported a dog barking in a unit.

**Sept 17** – residents in Ct. 16 reported plants stolen from patio.

**Sept 18** – water pipe reported broken in Ct. 14.

**Sept 20** – Allied/Barton witnessed a burglary in Ct. 14. Allied/Barton called LAPD but the suspect fled on foot before police arrived.

## Committee News and Reports

*Board meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in the clubhouse. Meeting minutes are posted by the board on the clubhouse door.*

**Budget and Finance Committee** - The Committee addressed procedures for reimbursements, and how to go about getting information from Ross Morgan. Members of the Committee will prepare variance reports for the Committee as a whole.

**Court Council** – The Committee discussed at length the policy and procedure of issuing parking violations. They resolved to ask a member of Parking Committee to attend a Court Council meeting to address these questions. The concern that residents are not separating recyclables from trash, and mixing the waste in the inappropriate bins, was also discussed. The Committee wishes to thank Board of Directors member Nat Hutton on his successful efforts to get an additional stop sign along Coliseum.

**Cultural Affairs** – The Committee is delighted that both summer concerts went so well. Thanks to all who attended! Thanks also to Tad Daley for arranging a visit from Stan Chambers, held on August 25<sup>th</sup>. The Committee would like parents to get involved in the Halloween Party to be held the last Saturday of October. Please contact 323-293-4781 to get involved.

**Design Review** – The Committee considered several remodel and alteration requests for units at VG. The Committee is addressing painting issues, and identifying which buildings are most in need of painting. The Committee has selected the model of benches to be used on the Green, and has submitted a proposal to the Board for their review.

**Grant Ad Hoc Committee** – The Committee approved the Landmark Budget, from which this Committee gets its funding. The Mills Act continues to be a main focus of the Grant Committee, and they are diligently addressing how Village Green might best be served by the Mills Act.

**Landscape Committee** – The Committee is tracking funds received from the fund grant to be sure they are posted to the proper accounts. The Committee feels it is okay to restart the mulch program as long as watering is continued. Dead-heading of roses continues.

**National Historic Landmark** – The Committee went over the budget for 2006, and plans to increase spending on digitizing original documents to better serve the archive of Village Green.

**Safety Committee** – The Committee is currently addressing communication with Allied/Barton. Specifically, the Committee is in the process of identifying what reports and information Allied/Barton will provide, and protocols they follow for training staff. The Committee is planning a Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, Oct. 22 with officers from LAPD.

**Tree Committee** – The Committee has received a considerable amount of information from the arborists and tree trimming reports, and is currently addressing how best to organize this information. The Committee is also addressing the issue of leaning trees. The Memorial Tree program is moving forward, and the Committee is currently addressing how best to plant memorial trees in accordance with National Historic Landmark status.

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Village Green *Highlights* is the community newsletter of the Village Green Owners Association, incorporated August 8, 1973. We make every attempt to ensure the accuracy of all information. However, we are not responsible for errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in this publication. The editor reserves the right to edit articles and letters for tone, clarity and length. Opinions expressed in *Highlights* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Board of Directors or the Management. Please submit submissions or comments to the editor at [vghighlights@yahoo.com](mailto:vghighlights@yahoo.com), or to the office.