

# The Village Green Highlights

A Quarterly Publication of the Village Green Owners' Association

Winter 2009

## *A View of the Board from a First-Time Board Member*

Diann Dumas has served on the Board of Directors of the Village Green for just under one year. The *Highlights* committee decided to talk to a new member of the Board, to learn about the first-year's experience. Diann is vivacious and easy to talk to (it also helped that we are neighbors in the same court).

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### *Save The Date*

**The Village Green Owners Association Annual Meeting  
will be held on  
Saturday, February 7, 2009. 10:00 a.m.  
Baldwin Hills Elementary School Auditorium  
5421 Rodeo Road (at Hauser)**

As we have done for the last two years, elections will be held by secret ballot per the elections rules in the Village Green Handbook.

Owners will vote for 5 candidates to the Board of Directors, who make decisions on behalf of all owners. **Don't forget to vote!**

**Meet the Candidates!  
Saturday, January 24, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. in the Village Green Clubhouse.**

The Board has also submitted a question on the ballot for owners about earthquake insurance, and is seeking to gauge interest by owners on this issue before moving forward.

It is very important that VGOA achieves a quorum in order to have the annual meeting. So, if you are not able to attend the meeting on Saturday, please use your proxy form OR submit your ballot to the Village Green Office by Friday, February 6, 2009.

### **Empowerment Congress West Area Neighborhood Development Council ECWANDC**

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment was created by the City of Los Angeles to address neighborhood issues and concerns. Village Green is included in the ECWANDC area along with Leimert Park, Baldwin Hills, Baldwin Vista, Baldwin Village and the surrounding areas. Village Green owners and residents are invited to the monthly meetings to discuss issues that affect our community.

#### **Monthly Meetings**

**1st Wednesdays** (Town Hall Meetings)  
Community Build  
4305 Degnan Blvd.  
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**3rd Tuesdays** (Board Meetings)  
Community Health Councils  
3731 Stocker Blvd 2nd Floor  
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**[www.ECWANDC.org](http://www.ECWANDC.org)  
[www.lacityneighborhoods.com](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com)**

—Reatha Simon  
Outreach Chair, ECWANDC  
VG resident, Court 11

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**Village Green Website  
<http://villagegreenla.net>**

# National Historic Landmark Status: Our 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

January 2009 marks the eighth anniversary of Village Green's designation as a National Historic Landmark, a coveted ranking bestowed on only a few historic sites and even fewer residential communities in the United States. This is an appropriate time to take a look at how being a Landmark influences life in the Green.

## Stewardship and Changes

In addition to being a great honor, Landmark status has placed a great responsibility on the entire Village Green community to be good stewards of our site. While researching and interviewing for this article, I began to realize the connection between Landmark status and the many positive (and sometimes confusing) changes I've noticed around the Green in the last few years: the gradually improving building maintenance and appearance of the grounds, the pride I hear in comments of neighbors, the new crop of young and enthusiastic residents interested in preservation, the large groups of students and preservationists touring the Green, the reproduction of the 1940s mural gracing a clubhouse wall, the proliferation of committees and specialists, even the (strangely-named) Cultural Landscape Report Committee members tirelessly surveying the vegetation in my and everybody else's courts to begin a process of developing a badly-needed framework for planting decisions. These activities, carried out by volunteer board and committee activists, and paid staff, flow from that charge of stewardship required by the Landmark designation.

## Financial Benefits and Challenges

One expected change that has not occurred is property-tax reductions for homeowners and grants to help us fund our deferred infrastructure maintenance. Many people who voted for the Landmark status are dismayed that it has not opened the door to these benefits. The Landmark Committee ran into several problems as it applied for over 20 grants in recent years. A key problem has been that most foundations award grants only to tax-exempt 501 (c)(3) organizations. The Village Green Owners Association, like other homeowner associations, is considered a not-for-profit mutual benefit association; we do not have 501 (c)(3) status. A non-profit 501(c)(3), the Friends of Village Green, has now been set up, which can receive grants and tax-deductible contributions toward Landmark projects. The door is open for volunteers who would like to work on securing grants.

*(Continued on page 5)*

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\* **Correction—Opossums are not good residents of the VG** \*  
\*  
\* The Garden Gurus article in the Summer 2008 issue of *Highlights* suggested making a home for \*  
\* animals on your patio. While our patios are fine habitats for birds and butterflies, the article \*  
\* mistakenly included opossums in the list of critters that could grow their young on patios. The \*  
\* authors of Garden Gurus did not intend to suggest that the VG should be a habitat for \*  
\* opossums. \*  
\* —Laurie Liles and Lorraine Secor, Village Green Garden Gurus \*  
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*(View, Continued from page 1)*

I asked Diann, a resident of Village Green for 18 years, if she knew how the Board functioned before she was elected. "Not really," she said. She'd attended some Board meetings as an observer, not necessarily as a participant. I wager that most residents, like me, don't know that much about how the Board works.

Was being on the Board what you expected? She said she was not sure what she was getting into. It took time for her to get accustomed to her role and to "learn the ropes." More-experienced Board members helped her learn her way, and the Board president held an orientation session. Board members also serve as non-voting liasons to one or two committees. As liason to the Budget & Finance Committee, Diann's task is to inform the committee of the Board's actions, and to help the committee accomplish their goals (which often means writing and submitting a resolution to the Board).

Diann attends the monthly Board meeting, as well as the monthly Budget committee meeting. How much time do you spend on these duties? She did not give me a time in hours, but did say that she spends "significant time" preparing for meetings, attending meeting and on follow-up. In fact, when I entered her home for the interview, she was typing a Village Green memo.

Early in her tenure for the Board, Diann reviewed "quite a few" e-mails and phone calls directly from residents. That has tapered off. Now, much of her communication with residents is direct face-to-face and informal—people talk to her while she walks on the Green.

What are her impressions of this first year? She says everything takes longer than she might like. She is learning to work together in a group, and she is learning what concerns others have on the issues.

After speaking with Diann, I had learned more about how the Board functions, and I was impressed with her commitment to her responsibility and to the Village Green.

—Evelyn Greenwald  
*Highlights Committee*

## *Trick-or-Treating, Storytelling, and More at the Halloween Party*



The VG annual Halloween party on October 25 was enjoyed by over 40 young people and their parents. Participants carved pumpkins, went trick-or-treating and once again were enthralled by the storytelling of VG resident Rob Curtis. Before sending everyone home, the committee served refreshments. The Cultural Affairs Committee extends thoughts of appreciation to Mary Jane Armstrong, Bridgett Ritter, Tad Daley and Kitty Felde for welcoming the trick-or-treaters to their homes; to Sue Hausmann for once again making all the candy bags; and to the parents who helped supervise and clean-up. Alison Grover-Khoury coordinated this event with the assistance of Alva Harper, Jean Wilson, Christina Buie, and Marcie Thelemaque. The committee is hoping to get more parents involved in both the planning and implementation of the children's events; the next one will be the annual Easter Egg Hunt.

—Molly O'Brien,  
*Cultural Affairs Committee*



**Advertise in Highlights**  
**Rates start at \$20. Discounts for VG residents.**

# Chess for All Ages: Join the Local Chess Club!

Village Green homeowner Tad Daley has been running a chess club at our local library since early 2003. The club meets every Monday night from 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the Baldwin Hills Library on LaBrea. Tad estimates they have taught the basics of the game to about 300 souls now—grown-ups and youngsters. They could really use some more grown-up volunteers. "Some weeks it is 10-12 kids and only 1-2 grown-ups," says Tad. "You don't have to know much about chess really. It's more about just spending a bit of time with the kids, and getting them to sit still and concentrate and use their brains a bit, rather than setting the library or the city on fire."

So if you have kids older than about 5 or 6 who would like to learn the game, or if you would like to play a bit of chess yourself—and do a little befriending and informal mentoring of at-risk youth—do drop by the club. "Sometimes," says Tad, "I sneak a few of the little monsters back into the book stacks, and actually get them to check out a book. Think of the possibilities."

Chess Club meets every Monday Night, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Baldwin Hills Branch Library, 2906 S La Brea, at Westhaven, just south of the I-10 freeway. (323) 733-1196, [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org).

For more information about the chess club, contact Tad Daley, [tad@daleyplanet.org](mailto:tad@daleyplanet.org).



## *Passages*



### **Elizabeth Dawson**

Long time Village Green resident Elizabeth Dawson, who has resided at 5546 in Court 9 since the mid-1970's, recently passed away on Sept. 24, 2008. She served on many committees during her life here at the Green and she will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

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### **Bill Hill**

William "Bill" Hill, who lived at the Village Green #5304 1/2 from the late 1970s to about 1998, passed away in November at the age of 90. He was an active member of the Cultural Affairs Committee and helped bring many summer jazz concerts to the Green. Raised in Vancouver, Canada, he was a renowned psychologist and researcher, and a lifelong jazz lover. His most pressing passion was being president of the Duke Ellington Society. For years, he held monthly meetings for fans of Duke Ellington in his unit, and pictures of Duke Ellington were all over his condo. He travelled all over the world giving presentations on Duke Ellington. Bill taught Psychology at the University of Redlands and was in the Canadian air force during the World War II. One of his old neighbors says he looked like WC Fields.

### **Marjorie Melin**

Marjorie Melin was a resident of the Village Green, Court 1, since 1947 when she moved here with her mother. Marge loved world travel and was a member of Elder Hostel. She was a staunch supporter of UCLA and the sports program there. She was often seen rushing off, impeccably dressed, to attend some cultural affair or luncheon with her friends. Marge was also observed with striking regularity, hand-washing her car inside her garage.

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### **Dorothy Washington**

Dorothy Washington, age 85, who resided in Court 1, died on May 7, 2008. She was a native of Chicago and moved to Los Angeles in 1960. Dorothy was a retired LAUSD educator who enjoyed travel, reading and helping young people. She was an active member of her church where she was the chair of the scholarship committee. She was also an active member of the Village Green Friends and a regular at the Thursday meetings at the Clubhouse. She was also a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and of the Auxiliary of the Tuskegee Airmen. Her husband Curtis Washington, who died in 1960, served in WWII as a member of the Tuskegee Airmen. Dorothy was the sister-in-law of the late Ken Washington, also a longtime resident of the Village Green with his wife, Helen.

*(Landmark, Continued from page 2)*

Anyone may make a tax-deductible donation to the Friends of Village Green or organize fund-raising activities for projects related to our Landmark status.

Another difficulty is that government agencies and foundations usually give grants to organizations showing a strong public benefit. Since most historic properties are owned publicly or by a non-profit, they are open to the public and the public benefit is clear. Village Green is privately owned, so the public benefit has not been as clear. Activities such as educational tours are important ways Village Green demonstrates public benefit. Work on the Rico LeBrun mural in the clubhouse is of public benefit because it is in a public space. That work was made possible by grants the Landmark Committee did succeed in securing. Landmark and other committees continue to apply for and sometimes secure grants, but more needs to be done to realize the Green's public benefit potential.

### **Landmark and the Budget**

I wondered how the costs of stewardship are affecting the Green's budget, so I consulted Robert Bonfiglio, our manager. He pointed out the direct costs: landscape specialists; Landmark-related committee activities; meetings and conferences. These seem clear and fairly minimal, about \$27,000 in a total budget of almost \$3 million for 2009.

However, he said, there is no separate budget category for additional maintenance costs related to Landmark status, and those would be difficult to calculate. The need to retain the design and structural integrity of exteriors such as buildings, fences, patios, and garages can raise the cost of both labor and materials to repair or replace them. For example, the original garage sidings used tongue-and-

groove wood construction, a more expensive method than stucco. When the sidings need repair, tongue-and-groove must be used.

Bonfiglio figures these expenses are an unavoidable aspect of the mandate to maintain the historic integrity of the Green. "If you start changing things, where would it stop?" He also believes one way to offset some of the increased costs of maintenance is to encourage greater public use of the site for such events as art shows and weddings, some of which would bring in revenue.

### **Is Stewardship Worth It?**

It's difficult for a homeowner association to consistently choose historical integrity when we live in a throwaway culture featuring constant cheapening and standardization of design and materials. It's also difficult when it is cheaper or easier to avoid high-quality maintenance, or when new materials or methods are less costly, more efficient, or more attractive or up-to-date than the originals. But everyone I spoke to insisted that Landmark status does not trap us in a time warp. Robert Nicolais, a resident who worked on the Landmark application, said the National Parks Service (which administers the Landmark program) is open to change on evolving issues such as energy conservation (I had mentioned the lack of insulation in our exterior walls and windows) and is constantly seeking balance as times change. The standards are written broadly and are open to interpretation. Nicolais and Board director Steven Keylon are convinced that if more residents volunteer on committees, such as Design Review, and research technical issues and precedents, the better the chances are of reaching sensible compromises.

To take just one example of a contentious issue that technology (and a little community-minded thinking) may solve now, or in the future:

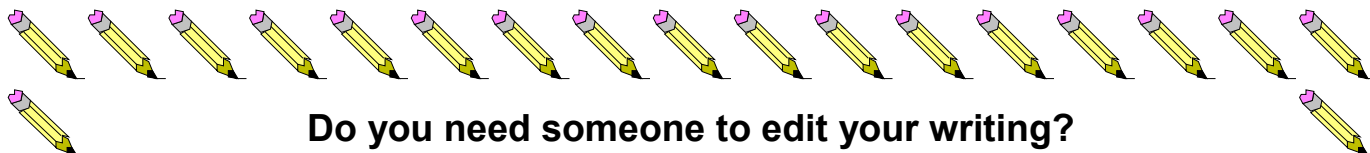
*(Continued on page 6)*



(Landmark, Continued from page 5)

Nicolais wondered if maybe one satellite dish could provide reception for the whole Green. And Keylon insisted that most of the time, irksome aspects of life in Village Green have to do with the practical realities of condominium living, not the Landmark status. Solutions can often be found either through changes in our association rules, modifications in design or materials that don't violate the CC&Rs or building codes, or simply more neighborly attitudes.

—Lucy Fried  
VG resident, Court 13



## Do you need someone to edit your writing?

- \* Organize your ideas
- \* Strike the right tone
- \* Find the best word
- \* Observe the conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

I can help you reach your audience for school papers, memoirs or short stories, advertising copy, or other writing. I promise to offer reasonable rates and take your project seriously.

Lucy Fried, Village Green resident Recently retired National Board Certified high school English and Advanced Placement English teacher.

323.291.6994



## The Court 1 Trash Enclosure Experiment

Court 1 residents have been test subjects since August 2008 for using a lock on their trash enclosure gate. The idea came from a recommendation made by a resident and was passed through the Village Green Court Council. General feedback given to the Court 1 Court Council representative by the court residents has been overwhelmingly positive in favor of the lock.

It has reduced the instances of non-residents scavenging through the trash and leaving the dumpster lids open. There has been a marked decrease in the odors imposing on residents who live near the trash enclosure. The Board of Directors will evaluate the results and responses of the residents in Court 1 to determine if other court trash enclosure areas should adopt a locking gate.



## Do You Know How to Use the Village Green Escort Service?

Village Green Owners Association contracts with Platt Security Company to provide residents and owners with an escort at any time, from their vehicle to their unit door or vice versa. Just call the Platt dispatch at 1-800-986-3868 to request an escort. Or, you may drive to the call box located just outside the VG Office entrance and press the security code of 8140\* to request an escort. Platt recommends that if you are in a vehicle waiting, and see either the Platt car or the Platt officer on the bike, that you turn your headlights on and off to get their attention. The wait is usually between 5 and 10 minutes. Residents can request a return phone call from Platt dispatch to their cell phones to confirm that an officer is on the way.

