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24 Years of a Venice Institution End with Death of Mark Sponto

Sponto is gone

By Suzy Williams

On December 28, our beloved Mark "Sponto" Kornfeld, died in the gallery that he had created – Sponto's – at 7 Dudley Avenue. This had been a space in which every Venetian felt at home during the last 24 years.

Sponto died of an apparent heart attack. He had come in the afternoon, left his keys in the outside door, and had begun to run a shower, which was still running six hours later when his body was found.

He had complained to friends of having chest pain the previous week. Born Mark Kornfeld in Glen Cove, New York, on August 29, 1949, he was only 59 years old.

The venue, which once held the Venice West Cafe, home of the Beat Generation in Venice, was a mecca to artists of every Venice stripe with constant showings of original art, cutting-edge films, lectures, poetry readings and musical performances, mostly of local persuasion.



Photo by Ron Proulx



Photo by Jim Smith

Memorial for Sponto
11 a.m.
Jan. 11
in front of
Sponto Gallery
(Dudley Ave.) at
Ocean Front
Walk.

Twice a year Sponto Gallery hosted a Solstice extravaganza, hosted by Ibrahim and Diane Butler, wherein a group show of mostly homeless artists and all sorts of live musicians performed. The celebration often lasted all day and late into the night.

The Venice community has taken a very hard hit at the loss of this generous, impish, life-affirming man. He was the ultimate hippie, sooth-sayer, sunset appreciator, lady admirer, Venice aficionado.

Losing Sponto is very hard, unexpected and deeply sad for me and many more in our community.

The last couple of years was an immense struggle for him to keep the venue afloat. Certainly the loss of this pillar of our community can only make us more aware of the handful of remaining benevolent people who preserve our unique culture with such intelligent passion.

The only way that we who are left behind can deal with this ridiculous profound loss is to dance, love more, kick out the jams, and cry our eyes out. *Sponto Sponto Sponto.* We may have had the chance to thank you, but why didn't we get a chance to say goodbye...?

The last time I saw Sponto was on first friday this December on Abbot Kinney at Zingara, the gypsy clothing and artifact store. We were full of merriment, based on the largess of the store propri-

—continued on page 6

Remembering Sponto

By Leland Auslender

Mark Kornfeld, who answered equally to "Sponto," the name of his art gallery, was always the happy host at his art openings during the many years he operated the place. In the sixties, it had been the Venice West Cafe, where Beats and Hippies gathered to share camaraderie, food and poetry.

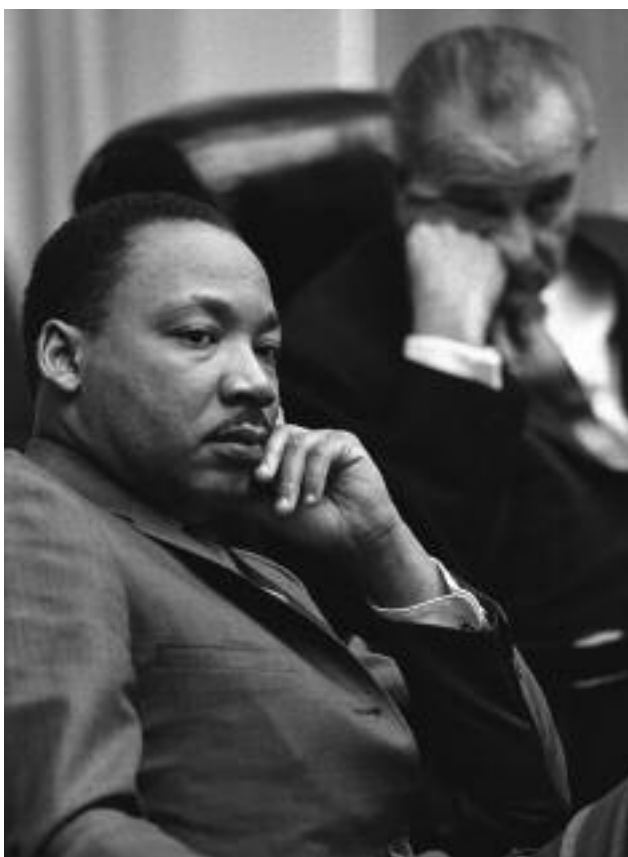
—continued on page 6

My Friend Sponto

By Carol Fondiller

Two people who have left their imprint on the Venice "Art Scene" have died. Both within the same week. One got the full funeral treatment of a prominent art personage who traveled in influential money and powerful circles. The other died almost anonymously in his small gallery on 7 Dudley Avenue.

—continued on page 6



THEN:

Martin Luther King, Jr. with The President
Celebrate MLK Day, Jan. 19

"I think we may be able to get a Negro president in less than 40 years." —MLK, Dec. 24, 1964.



NOW:

The President
Celebrate Obama's Inauguration, Jan. 20
See Poems for a New President on page 9

CASUALTIES IN IRAQ

4,219 U.S. Dead

30,904 U.S. Wounded

Iraqi Dead: 1,305,837

Cost: \$584+ Billion Source: costofwar.com

AFGHANISTAN

630 U.S. Dead

Sources: justforeignpolicy.org • casualties.org • antiwar.com



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Karl Abrams, C.V. Beck, Carol Fondiller, Don Geagan, Mark Lipman, Lydia Poncé, Krista Schwimmer, Jim Smith, Erica Snowlake, Alice Stek.
Intern: Jessica Aden

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, sustainers 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. No payment is made for material used.

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We Can, We Have, We Will!

Dear Beachhead,
Thanks for the article last month, "Can We Keep Venice Livable? Yes We Can! And Yes We Have!"

Much has changed in Venice in the last 40 years, but fortunately much remains familiar. Venice has experienced a great deal of development—as much as any Westside community. Many old homes, apartments and businesses have been replaced by newer, denser, and more contemporary development. Much of Venice's industrial property has been rezoned and redeveloped as dense, multi-family apartments and condominiums.

But the Venice community retains the eclectic character that has been so popular for generations. As the article suggests, this is because Venice residents have actively and successfully opposed the largest and most egregious development proposals. Though there is great pressure to redevelop our beach community, whenever a truly outrageous proposal is made by a developer so concerned with his own profit that he is blind or indifferent to our quality of life, Venetians have stepped up to protect our community.

The article mentioned most of the major development proposals turned back by residents but overlooked perhaps the most outrageous. In the early 1980's, Birtcher Development, an Orange County-based developer, proposed building a two-million square foot regional shopping center known as Admiralty Place on the west side of Lincoln at the end of the Marina Freeway on the Oxford Triangle site now occupied by Ralphs, the Marina Pointe Apartments and the three condominium towers known as The Regatta, The Azzurra, and the Cove. It would have been a huge multi-story shopping center that would have generated far more traffic than the existing buildings. Opposition to that proposal was led by Oxford Triangle residents.

Although much of old Venice has been replaced by new and larger construction, if it were not for the efforts of many committed Venice residents, quality of life in our beach community would undoubtedly be much worse. Next time we hear about a proposal that is truly out of scale with our Venice Beach community, remember—to keep Venice livable, Just Say No.

Yes We Can!
Steve Freedman

Buying Lincoln Place?

Dear Mr. Editor,
Since the December issue of the Beachhead is running a story with completely false information, it most definitely needs to be retracted at the soonest opportunity.

Your so-called "confirmed" information that the tenants are in negotiations to buy the property is so false that it is overwhelming.

It is irresponsible to put into print such blatant lies which during these times of court cases and other issues can put our few tenants, and those on appeal, into great jeopardy, if it falls into the hands of the AIMCO attorneys who are just looking for any tiny reason of nonsense to take into court against us.

Please, cease and desist, immediately from printing such blatant lies in the future. You have no idea the ramifications such garbage can cause in a court of law for us.

Barbara Eisenberg

Contrary to what your sources have said, there is no negotiation between the tenants and AIMCO relative to purchase of LP by buyers lined up by the tenants.

There are talks between the lawyers for the tenants and the lawyers to AIMCO, but these talks are strictly confined to issues being litigated and a purchase is not on the table.

Sheila Bernard

(From the Collective: The Beachhead stands by its article.)

City Controller Sues City Attorney

Dear Beachhead,
There has been discussion in the press about a "fight" between the City Attorney and myself. I'm writing to personally update you regarding this issue.

In fact, the disagreement is over the City Controller's charter-mandated responsibilities to conduct performance audits. Section 261 (k) of the City Charter clearly says that the Controller shall "conduct performance audits of all departments and may conduct performance audits of City programs."

Despite this language, the City Attorney has formally interpreted the charter to prohibit the Controller from conducting performance audits of programs if they are housed in elected officials' offices.

The City Attorney has sued me to prevent my proceeding with an audit of his Workers' Compensation program. The only appropriate resolution is to now turn to the Los Angeles Superior Courts.

I have exhausted all other options, including trying to have this matter placed before the voters on the March ballot, which the Council refused to do.

The City Council has asked me to "stand down" in my attempt to have the Charter clarified and refused to give me paid legal counsel for my defense against the City Attorney's lawsuit. This is a fight over transparency and accountability and your right to know how your government is spending your taxpayer dollars. I will not back down or step aside. I will pursue this fight so the people of Los Angeles can have clarification once and for all on this important issue.

Laura Chick

Homeless Committee

It's too bad that the Beachhead still resorts to the yellow journalism and outright lies that Mark Lipman wrote last month in "Neighborhood Council's Homeless RV Committee Holds Secret Meetings."

He accused us of "forming a sub-committee specifically tasked with looking for ways to evict poorer residents from our community."

The committee in fact was formed to "identify sites where ...RV's could take night shelter.....and to review city ordinances and propose language ...that would allow this pilot program" We are looking at private and public lots in Venice and CD 11 for legal RV overnight parking that would have minimal impact on residences.

Mark Lipman was at the meeting when this sub-committee was formed. Please tell me how this is "evicting poorer residents"

If you want to accuse the Overnight Parking Permits of this, that is possible fair game. I am totally against OPDs for many reasons, one of which is that the RV dwellers will be harassed more than ever. I joined the Homelessness/RV Committee to find legal lots and streets for these people once the OPDs are in place, as I fear that OPDs are inevitable.

I presume you will print the Mark Ryavac letter regarding the Brown act. No violations were committed.

We are looking for sites in Venice and CD11. Some of us on the committee are also trying to get selected commercial/industrial streets approved for RV overnight dwelling. This is hardly "evicting" poorer residents.

Beachhead, remind your writers about due diligence.

Shame on Mark, he knows my position. I have been quite public about it. Am I guilty by association?

thanks, carolyn rios

Response from Mark Lipman: On this issue, I would respond that my key sources for the article in question are highly credible and trusted.

As the reader admits in her letter, saying that the Overnight Parking Districting is "fair game" (but not this sub-committee), when saying that it was formed to look for ways to evict poorer residents from our community, may I point out that the majority of this new sub-committee (3 out of 4) are the very same people who have been working so hard to make sure that OPDs are created in Venice. The very same people. A simple fact.

It is therefore absolutely fair to say that this new sub-committee is merely an extension of the OPD agenda, which is the eviction from Venice of anyone living in a vehicle, which by common knowledge we can fairly say represent an economically disadvantaged (poor) segment of the community.

Might I also point out that the Venice Neighborhood Council does not even have the right to look outside of our Venice boundaries. Venice is Venice, not CD11, not Los Angeles, or anywhere else. You're out of your jurisdiction.

If you still feel that my descriptive was unjust, may I remind you of the November 6 committee meeting, when Steve Clare presented the 38 recommendations that came out of the Homelessness Task Force he chaired. When he made his presentation, merely a few questions were asked, then it was "Thank you very much, next."

To date there has not been any substantive debate on these recommendations. Why not?

Steve Clare was immediately followed by Officer Richardson from the LAPD, who presented his recommendation of moving RVs to Dockweiler Beach, which is 10 miles away from Venice.

Immediately following this presentation, the LAPD recommendation was grafted onto the mission statement for this new sub-committee.

Is what's happening in this committee suspect? Absolutely it is.

As far as being guilty by association, I don't know, did you show up for the meetings?

True enough, I do know Carolyn Rios' positions and highly respect the work she has done in this community. That said, as a journalist, it is my responsibility to report the simple facts of who serves in which capacity, as a basic matter of record keeping. There can be no fault found in that.

Nor can there be in pointing out when a legal line is, or is about to be, crossed. As a journalist that is my duty to the community - it keeps the politicians honest.

Too bad other news outlets are not as diligent in this public service as the Beachhead is. If they were, this country would never have gone to war.

Happy New Year.
Mark Lipman

Westminster Elementary Is Growing (plants)

Dear Beachhead,

Westminster Elementary is slowly but surely converting its sea of asphalt schoolyard into a state-of-the-art learning laboratory, organic garden and joint-use community center.

The first phase has been the school's organic garden/outdoor classroom. Our garden is fully integrated into in-class science, language and math curricula. First through fifth graders plant, tend, harvest, cook and joyously eat what they grow. They participate in a "seed to table" experience that enriches their understanding of ecology, biology, nutrition and love of the natural world. Our garden is the school's oasis.

The garden is a collaborative effort of Master Gardeners Nora Dvosin and Nancy Giffin, principal Karen Brown, students, teachers, PTA parents, and a steady stream of community supporters and volunteers... like Jim Murez of the Venice Farmer's Market who has contributed labor and a yearly stipend, as well as the Los Angeles Conservation Corps who recently removed 3,600 sq.ft. of asphalt to enlarge our garden to 6,000 sq.ft. We won an Office of Community Beautification grant to fund this expansion. Finally we can plant the fruit trees, vines, shrubs, strawberry and raspberry beds, vegetable and flower beds, potato, corn and pumpkins fields that we've been planning for.

But our garden is just the first step in a much larger vision. Our Master Plan, drawn by Venice architect Lewin Wertheimer, rethinks the entire campus. We have a school greening project coming up on January 31, during which we'll plant 30 trees, vines and shrubs and flowers on the campus.

With help from architect Scott McGillivray, we are re-imagining the Kindergarten playground, expanding it, greening it and opening it up to the community on weekends. To accomplish this we're applying for Joint Use Funding from LAUSD and counting on our local community merchants and Neighborhood Council to support our project.

The eventual goal is to refurbish the entire playground with new athletic equipment, a rubberized running track, an urban forest of native California trees, a reading garden, murals, and a Native American herb garden. These ideas spring forth from the students, the teachers, the volunteers and the community at large.

We're hoping to become a healthy, beautiful, environmentally sustainable heart-center for the community.

Nora Dvosin

Westminster Garden Project Manager



Westminster School Garden
Photo by Jeffrey Karoff

Keeping up the struggle

Dear Beachhead,

I salute all of you people who have been in the struggle all these years. As a former resident, activist and the former chairman of B.A.L.A., a Chicano militant organization created in Venice in 1968, for the sole purpose of fighting for the people's rights.

I surely remember my ol' friend Steve Clare, and fondly remember Marge Buckley, Rick Davidson, John Haag and many others. By the way my name is Rafael Melgoza, aka "Chino." Thank you for carrying on the message, the struggle.

Chino venice

IN BRIEF

Neighborhood Council

At the December 16 Venice Neighborhood Council Board meeting a petition with over 200 signatures demanding that the board rescind its approval of Overnight Parking Districts in Venice was submitted. In accordance with VNC Bylaws, the board now has no less than 30 days and no more than 90 days to hold a public vote on the issue.

A tentative date of February 17 has been given for a public vote. Please see next month's Beachhead for more information on this very important matter.

Additionally, the VNC announced that they are now accepting proposals for use of the parcel of public land at 520 Venice Way. For consideration, proposals must be received by the VNC no later than February 2, including a description of what you would do and how you would do it.

For more information please see the VNC website at: www.venicenc.org

Homelessness/RV Committee

With ever growing tensions building between rivaling factions on this committee, at the December 4 meeting Dennis Hathaway, Susan Millmann, Samantha Tammaro and Reverend Tom Zeigert, the committee co-chair, all resigned in protest. Carolyn Rios was later named as the new co-chair for this committee.

—Mark Lipman

Venice Town Council Takes Appeal of Permit Parking to the Coastal Commission

The Venice Town Council devoted its December meeting to building the fight against permit parking in Venice.

At the meeting and in the following few days, 33 multi-page appeals were made to the California Coastal Commission, which has the authority to overrule the city of Los Angeles in its attempt to impose the restricted overnight parking.

The application for Venice permit parking was made by an official of the city's Dept. of Transportation, with the urging of some Venice residents who see the permits as a way to eliminate recreational vehicles from the streets.

RV owners would be ineligible for permits unless they also had a valid stationary address in Venice. Also ineligible for permits would be all residents who live between Speedway and Ocean Front Walk. In addition, residents of Venice walk streets would have no say on whether sur-
rounding streets required permits.

The California Coastal Commission is likely to take up the appeals at its meeting in early February.

—Jim Smith

Fire on Palms

With 3 helicopters circling overhead on the evening of December 10, there was bound to be something happening. Arriving at Palms, east of Lincoln, it turned out to be a two alarm fire. The Beachhead, first on the scene, discovered that this was the second fire at the same address in just as many months.

(While) "There is nothing suspicious," says Battalion Chief Boyd of LA Fire Department Battalion 4, "because of there being a second fire in so short a time, the arson squad would be investigating. The first fire was not arson," Chief Boyd was quick to point out.

However, it is interesting to note that the same building had been scheduled for demolition the following day. This proved fortunate as no one was injured or killed in the blaze.

One suggestion to the cause came from a witness who preferred to remain anonymous saying that it was the wiring. This is a possibility as another witness noted that the owners were known for doing their own repairs.

Venice's own Engine 63 participated in putting the fire out in just 15 minutes, which prevented it from spreading further to the neighboring houses. Bravo to a job well done.

—Mark Lipman

Paul Robeson (play) in Venice

On December 19 & 21, *Venice Food Not Bombs* continued their tradition of resurrecting prominent leftists and bringing them to Venice. KB Solomon brought Paul Robeson's songs and activism to life at the United Methodist Church's Peace and Justice Hall. The year before, Karl Marx; this year Che?

—Alice Stek



KB Solomon as Paul Robeson



New Year's Evolution

By Amy V. Dewhurst

The celebration of New Year's dates back to 153 B.C. when Janus, the Roman God of beginnings and guardian of doors and entrances was placed at the start of the calendar. I wonder if the Ancient Romans braced 154 B.C. with promises to "Lose weight," "Stop smoking," and "Drink less," which are ranked the highest amongst Americans' recurring resolutions. January is filled with gym memberships, Nicorette purchases and quiet nights at home, but we all know come St. Patrick's Day all bets are off. What can we do to make 2009 a year of lasting change?

A resolution is defined as "A commitment that an individual makes to reform a habit." Who wants to remind themselves of their self-perceived faults year after failure-filled year?

A much more empowering solution is to set an attainable goal, positive intention, or what Hindu scholars call a "Sankalpa." Dr. Swami Shankardev Saraswati describes it as "A Sanskrit word which means a resolve formed in the mind or heart. It also means will power, purpose, intention and conviction. A Sankalpa is the conscious articulation of a desire, with clear and focused intention.

Our intention is formed into a simple positive sentence and then repeated either mentally or aloud." Simply put that means replacing the resolution "I will lose 10 pounds" with the goal "I will run everyday" leading to the affirmation "I look and feel great". Those are actions and thoughts within our control. Isn't that an easier place to start?

On November 4, I heard a strong Sankalpa shouted from the Venice rooftops. It echoed down Abbot Kinney Boulevard all the way to the beach. It was used as a greeting, a cheer and even a march. It was the celebratory scream of "Yes. We. Can."

President Elect Barack Obama's inauguration will serve as a strong reminder of the power of

intention. Four years ago he was a peripheral political figure. In January he will hold the highest office in our country. An advocate of conviction and a catalyst for change his campaign affirms "There has never been anything false about hope."

Venetians' Hopes for 2009:

"Whatever I'm facing--career, love, family, traffic, health, finances, leisure or the lack of it--I will take a deep breath, smile and do my best" -Jennifer Quail, Screenwriter

• "To work at the Venice Skatepark" -Tonan Ruiz, VSA

• "Live Life More" -Michael Ray Ponce, Photographer

• "Same as it is every year. To sell a script" -Jason Burke, Screenwriter

• "A food bank in Venice" -Nina Merced, The Fruit Gallery

• "Produce More. Consume Less" -Dana Puscetta, Music video director

• "Just blast front-side air out of the pool" -Joe Ayala

• "To get paid more to do what I love" -Celia Chaves, Singer

• "Less reaction, more acceptance, and more discipline is my new years plan of action. Most of all is to have more FUN than I did in previous years." -Julie Kokesch, Medical esthetician and meditation facilitator

• "International Travel" -Venice Originals' Kaycee Smith

• "To figure out why boys are dumb...Oh, and get business cards" Shima Razavi, Writer/director

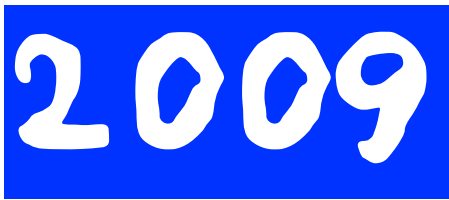
• "The new skate park!!!" -Dennis Lyons, Jr.

• "Yeah, the new skate park...hopefully it won't be too crowded" -Shane McKinley

• "South America!" Cristin Costello, Urbanic Paper Boutique

• "To brighten the day of anyone walking through my door, with great treats and conversation." -Sassan Rostamian, SAUCE on Hampton

• "More. Better. Vibes. Stronger Vibes!" -Angel



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WE DON'T NEED YOUR STINKIN' PERMITS IN VENICE

7PM Friday, Jan. 9
 at the **United Methodist Church**
 Auditorium, 2210 Lincoln Blvd.
 Dinner served at 6:30PM - Food donation \$5
 The next step in saving Venice from Overnight Permit Parking (OPD) is the California Coastal Commission in February.

Venice Town Council

Depression Got You Down? Turn Off Your TV And Open Your Beachhead!

Help the Beachhead survive these troubled times:

• **Sustain:** Become a Beachhead Sustainer. For \$100 a year, you can become a Beachhead Fat Cat. The free press you save may be your own. Now you can donate on-line. Go to www.freevenice.org and click the button and use your favorite credit card.

• **Advertise:** Promote your local business in the Beachhead. Our ad rates are the lowest in town, and reach the most Venetians per issue of any newspaper. Check our website for details.

• **Subscribe:** For just \$35 a year, you can receive the Beachhead in a plain brown wrapper in the privacy of your own home.

• **Circulate:** Distribute 100 Beachheads on your block. We'll deliver a bundle to your door.

• **Report:** Send us news of your neighborhood. Write a complete article or just tip us off about a newsworthy event.

• **Recycle:** After you've read the Beachhead in a coffeehouse, restaurant or bar, pass it on to someone else. You'll make friends and help build our community.

Please list me as a Free Venice Beachhead Sustainer! (mail to: Beachhead, POB 2, Venice CA 90294)

Here's my check for: _____ \$100 (one year); _____ \$50 (6 months);
 _____ \$8 monthly (electronic check)

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



The late folk singer, Utah Phillips, was a Beachhead fan.

Big Bill's

10:28 Friday, December 19, 2008, A-2, Hamilton High School Music Academy Magnet.....Big Bill's on Abbot Kinney saved my ass,/ as well as a few hundred. What a mess!/ The shoes in back weren't working. Just the front/ brake pads were stopping me. Went on a hunt/ to find a universal joint. But two/ were needed. Everyone told me to go/ to Big Bill's, off of Venice. I obeyed./ That's where each one of those repairs were made./ My brake's proportion valve was stuck, and so/ the fluid wasn't reaching either shoe./ Bill fixed the valve himself. Don't say he can't./ My brake light on the dashboard, off, it went./ Worth every dime, and more, I must confess./ Bring all your needs to Bill's. He'll make them pass.....

—R F Wagner, Jr.



Big Bill's on Abbot Kinney, by annalaurent

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Murder Unsolved

By Mark Lipman

On the evening of December 8, a fatal shooting occurred in the alleyway behind 1600 Lincoln Blvd.

The victim, Philimon Ernesto Consequa, known as "Cheripenga," was originally from Oaxaca, Mexico. No further information was available.

Though it is not clear if a gun was found, police detectives did find a single .45 caliber cartridge on the scene.

Upon interviewing the main witness to the crime, who we will refer to as "John," The Beachhead discovered the following facts in the case:

When John came home at approximately 5:30pm, he saw three Latino males with shopping carts - the usual crowd - in the alley. It was not clear if alcohol was involved or not, yet one of the three had apparently passed out on a medium size black sheeted mattress. The other two were talking a little further down.

At 7:40pm, John was sitting down, working on his computer, when suddenly he heard the sound of what could only be gun fire - a single shot. Looking out from his window, he could see that there were now two men lying upon the mattress, where as there was only one two hours before. The third was standing next to the mattress.

"Psst ... psst..." he was waving to the man lying on the far end, trying to get him to wake up. Stirring, one of the men groggily awoke, lifted himself up, urinated, then stumbled over to his shopping cart and left, oblivious to what had just happened.

The third man then readjusted the victim's body so that it would be fully on the mattress, then himself left on a bicycle.

Leaving his house, John witnessed the bloody scene and then followed the suspect down to Lincoln Dental. Taking a photograph of the man he then asked, "Hey , what happened to your buddy?"

"I don't know. I know nothing," was the reply.

Returning home, John immediately called 9-1-1. Within 2 minutes a police helicopter was hovering overhead. "They put the spotlight on me," John says, "and followed to where I was pointing - to the dead guy on the mattress. Within 30 second ten police cars were there." The time was 7:55pm.

Forensic teams worked for hours through the

night measuring out and photographing the crime scene. From examination of the evidence left behind The Beachhead found that the victim had been shot in the head.

Upon sweeping the area, one Latino on a bicycle was stopped and questioned at Ralphs and two others in a nearby park, all fitting the description. They were all released.

The next morning, around 9am, police had another three suspects in custody. Upon visual identification, two were released and the third was held as a positive match.

It is important to note that John did not see the shot or the gun. In his account he states that he sensed there was a fourth person present, who was blocked from his view.

It was later learned that the police do suspect that another person, a housed resident, was at the scene at the time of the murder, which would make sense, since it is doubtful that a homeless person living out of a shopping cart would be able to acquire such an expensive handgun.

Another unidentified source, familiar with the victim reported that there had been a conversation just before the shooting in which it was said, "If you're so angry, why don't you shoot something?" at which point the murderer shot the victim.

On December 12, LAPD obtained a warrant for the arrest of one Noe Rodriguez in connection with the shooting.

Police detectives were not immediately available for comment.

Windward Avenue Resident and Sculptor Robert Graham

By Jim Smith

Sculptor Robert Graham died Dec. 27 from undisclosed causes. He was 70 years old and had been ill for about six months. Graham lived with his wife, Anjelica Huston, on Windward Avenue. He was internationally known and admired by art connoisseurs.

Among his works are the 25-ton bronze doors on the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels and the huge headless sculptures that stand atop the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

Graham also created the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC., the Joe

Louis Memorial in Detroit, which he designed as a 24-foot fist and forearm, and a Duke Ellington memorial in New York City, among others. A small model of Graham's Ellington statue can be seen in the reception area of Danny's Restaurant on Windward Avenue.

Contrary to the obituary in the New York Times, Graham's mother was American and his father was Mexican. As a youth, Graham used his father's name and was known as Bob Peña.

While Graham was nearly universally admired in international art circles, he was much more controversial in Venice. When the city of Los Angeles approved his headless woman sculpture in the Venice circle there were 48 appeals to the California Coastal Commission.

Graham and Huston lived in a former bank building on Windward Avenue that had been expanded into a blank-walled fortress. He recently completed constructing an even larger studio next door. Community complaints were made that he had trashed the historic colonnades that had fronted the previous building. The colonnades had once stretched the entire block of Windward.

According to Wikipedia, Huston refused to move to Venice after they were married "unless Graham built them a fortress to live in. The result was a giant, windowless structure behind an opaque 40-foot fence."

Robert Graham, 70, a Sculptor of Monuments in Bronze

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — The sculptor Robert Graham, whose massive bronze works are seen on civic monuments across the United States, including the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial in Washington and the Duke Ellington Memorial in New York, died here on Saturday. He was 70.

The office of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, where many of his most famous works are located, confirmed the death in a statement.

In Washington, Mr. Graham's bronze sculptures mark the Roosevelt memorial, where bronze panels symbolize 54 social programs initiated during the New Deal. Mr. Graham also created the life-size bronze figure of Roosevelt in his wheelchair at the entrance to the memorial.

At the northeast corner of Central Park in Harlem, his Duke Ellington Memorial stands 30 feet high, with three columns topped by the Muses holding up an 8-foot



MONICA ALMEIDA/THE NEW YORK TIMES



ADAM NADEL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Left, the sculptor Robert Graham in 2002; right, his Duke Ellington Memorial in New York, depicting the musician next to a piano, during its unveiling ceremony in July 1997.

figure of the musician next to a piano.

Mr. Graham's 18-foot monument to Charlie Parker, depicting Parker's head above the words "Bird Lives," is in Kansas City, Mo. And in Detroit, his Joe Louis Memorial honors the boxer with a 24-foot bronze monument in the shape of a massive fist and forearm suspended from a pyramid structure.

Mr. Graham also designed a

number of prominent works in Los Angeles, including the Great Bronze Doors on the southeast side of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, an intricate imagery-filled project that took almost five years to complete. Another work in Los Angeles, "Olympic Gateway," consists of the headless figures of a muscle-bound man and a woman. It stands at entry to the Memorial Coliseum, where the 1984 Olym-

pics were held.

Mr. Graham was born in Mexico City in 1938 to a Mexican mother and an American father. He moved to the United States in 1952 and was educated at San Jose State College and the San Francisco Art Institute.

In 1962 he married the actress Anjelica Huston. In addition to Mr. Huston, he is survived by a son, Steven, from a previous marriage.

ONLINE: NOTABLE DEATHS

A slide show highlighting the lives of some of those who died this year.

nytimes.com/obituaries

Thanks Bob

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Arnold Springer

Remembering Sponto by Leland Auslander

—continued from page one

Sponto's body, mind, and soul seemed identified with the gallery, which, with little money and much magic, he managed to keep alive... as long as he was alive. Perhaps it was the outrageous, ever-rising rent that contributed to his heart attack and early demise.

So, as usual, he was floating in and out at the opening of the "Circle of Color" artists' reception in celebration of the December 21, 2008 winter solstice.

For eight years, being a fine-art photographer, I was one of a circle of Venice artists who exhibited work there twice a year (Summer solstice was the other time), and I always photographed the exhibits and colorful goings on, which included talented entertainers, drum circles, raucous bands, free-form dancing, and food and drink. The celebrations didn't sell much art, but they always attracted a gaggle of colorful characters, including many of Venice's homeless, who piled their plates high with the abundant free refreshments. I always had a field day photographing these odd eccentrics, who had the courage to be their unconventional, creative selves.

None was more unconventional and true to his nature than Sponto, who named himself by amalgamating spontaneous and pronto. However, for reasons I never understood, whenever I tried to photograph him, he would waive me off; he didn't want to be filmed. Perhaps he thought he didn't look good, or perhaps he just wanted to be remembered as he was in life, not in a picture. So I never got a photo of Mark. That is, until, by the magic of my photo angel, I caught him in the gallery kitchen so absorbed in gabbing to a gorgeous girl that I was able to surreptitiously sneak a photo of him—my first ever.

When, a few days later, Suzy Williams, who entertained at the events, and Gerry Fialka, who produced cinema screenings at the gallery, told me that Sponto had died, I couldn't believe it. He was so alive a few days earlier, and his being so much younger than my 83 years filled me with a peculiar trepidation. Now they were asking me to furnish photos for his memorial service.

So here is my one and only shot of Sponto, who certainly needs no photo to be remembered as that lively, loving spirit with happy twinkling eyes, spreading cheer to all who met him. The gallery may not survive Sponto's death, but photo or none, as Rumi observed, music from the soul is heard forever, throughout the universe.

Fondiller on Sponto

—continued from page one

Robert Graham sure as hell left his imprint on Venice. In addition to his sculptured homage to Elizabeth Short, known as the Black Dahlia, who was a young woman dismembered in the 1940's, the murder remains one of the more bizarre unsolved crimes in Los Angeles Crime Annals.

One can see this homage at the Venice Traffic Circle, where it was stuck there without knowledge or consent of most of the Venice Community and since poor Ms. Short had little or no connection to Venice, it would have been more appropriate to erect a statue of Charles Manson, at least he tried to kill someone in the Beachhouse apartments.

Graham turned those torsos out by the 100's, where they were bought by artrepeneurs. They're scattered over and in the salons of the world like the clowns painted by John Wayne Gancey, a famous dismemberer and cannibal of the late 20th century, who spends his time in prison painting clowns. They are much prized by people who prize clowns and killers.

I guess Graham had one of his mass produced torsos left over, needed a tax break, bestowed the thing on an ungrateful Venice. There were some Venetians who tried to take the torsos to heart by sticking a head on the torso and pasties on the torsos. Pert little titties to make it more Venice.

Graham hired thugs to beat up people who did that and installed surveillance equipment on an illegally constructed overhang that bangs like a flacid prick over Windward Avenue. Now that Graham is dead, the torso will appreciate in value, and it will be worth someone's time and effort to steal the damn thing. Perhaps the columns that he illegally uprooted from Windward Avenue so that he could build his illegally constructed overhang might replace his non-Venice referential piece.

Mark Kornfeld also died in then late December and was a member of the Art Community. I met him when he was one of the cutest guys in Venice. Curly blond hair, blue eyes, nice body, charming and funny. He had the greatest collection of junk I've ever seen - old clocks, stunning art, nouveau vases, kewpie dolls and bikes - old Schwinn Bikes that he repaired. I bought some of my favorite bikes from him, sturdy fat tires, with ladies' foot brakes that were stolen from me. I swear they spoke to me. I'd glide or pump furiously down the Ocean Front Walk and then on the bike path until I was driven off the path by skaters and thousand dollar aluminum titanium light-weight racing bikes who'd push me off the path yelling at me that I was too slow. But my bikes were much admired by the surfers. They were also admired by scoundrelly thieves.

Somehow he managed to rent 7 Dudley, home of the famous Venice West Café.



Photo by Leland Auslander

He opened up his art gallery in the late 70s. Mark told me he wanted to keep the spirit of the Venice West. He wanted to host poetry readings, art openings, which many times turned into art parties.

He allowed other people to use his space for meetings and community events. He picked up stuff to sell and was always on the lookout for chicks.

When Venice started to be trendy in the 60s the celebs who wanted to imbibe the "creative" atmosphere of Venice, charmed by the quaint beach cottages, they proceeded to destroy that which they professed to love.

Now Mark was as political as a Golden Labrador Retriever. He thought his little gallery would prosper with the onslaught of the Afflu-Hips.

Instead, a restaurant opened next door to him and immediately the restaurant began complaining about the bikes that Mark parked very neatly and out of the way on the sidewalk. Never mind that said restaurant illegally co-opted space on the sidewalk with tables and chairs, along with très chic slate sandwich boards announcing the specialties de la maison, guess who got cited and who didn't?

The owner of the building, speculator Werner Sharf tried to evict Mark so that the restaurant could expand its chiciness. Mark persevered and, along with people like Jerry Fialka and Suzy Williams, continued to do his own art and promote outsider art of various artists.

Edgy films, readings, history, music and parties continued and flourished in spite of continual

—continued on page 7

Sponto is gone – Suzy Williams

—continued from page one

etors and the general goodwill up and down, and Sponto said to me : "What would you like? I want to buy you a present – anything you want."

I, incredulous, said "What? Are you sure? Are you serious?" and he said "Yes - just pick it out."

So I showed him a couple of gem-colored candlesticks I'd become enamored with and he bought them for me pronto (meanwhile we met two lovely

young ladies who were taken by the huge vibes from the bubble of bliss we were occupying and we fell into a deep probe of each other's life-path-very Sponto-inspired).

Then Sponto said: "What else would you like?" and I said: "What do you mean? You want to get me something on top of this?" (I was already knocked out) "Yes ! Yes! What else would your heart desire?"

So I said: "Hmm.. Well, there are some wonderful question-mark old type-writer key earrings that I totally crave" and he said "Let's go," so we walked the half-block it took to get to Carol Tantau's, but unfortunately it had closed.

Sponto then turned his attention down the boulevard and bid me fondue and disappeared into the sparkly, shimmery, enchanted Abbot Kinney night. I called him the next day to thank him and he said "Oh yeah, baby it's all good...I gotta go...love you honey." Yes that was my last contact with Sponto.



Sponto in his gallery. Photo by eye~m~drc



40th Anniversary of the Free Venice Beachhead: A Night to Remember

Free Venice Beachhead • January 2009 • 7

By erica snowlake

Doing it Justice. Not a new slogan by Nike. A sentiment describing how we honor the entity that is so dear to our seaside community, the little newsprint rag packing a wallop since its magical inception in 1968, a year time travelers queued up for, and, equally of sublime consequence, a paper worth its weight in time.

Summer of Love. Love's labors won. This paper is a poem. The current collective members pulled rabbits out of hats reading passages from a kaleidoscope of erstwhile and dedicated former Beachhead staff and contributing writers spanning four decades. It was a full house first-gathering of its kind uniting Beachhead past and present with another traditional Venetian Mecca of literary pulse, Beyond Baroque, also celebrating their 40th birthday.

The night began with a drop-in by Councilperson Bill Rosendahl presenting the Beachhead Collective with a Certificate of Recognition. Well, yeah! Did the fine print hold hope for the restoration of Venice Cityhood? Indeed, promises are humming in the air, if not in every heart down in Whoville. We unanimously decided to pass this duly noted appreciation onto Carol Fondiller for lifelong guiding diva-ship of the Beachhead.

As a recording of the lush vocals of Silvia Kohan singing "Moon over Venice" filled the room, folks were treated to Collectivite honcho Jim Smith emceeing a stellar roster of readings by Collective members and video clips featuring Venice's beloved mannaifestations from the Ocean Front Walk to the Beat Poets to Lincoln Place.

Nobody rolled in their grave as poems by John Thomas (read by Karl Abrams), Stuart Z. Perkoff (read by Erica Snowlake) and John Haag (read by Della Franco) were delivered with Zen beret finesse, and we all cowered in delight to footage capturing Venetian Poet Laureate Philomene Long's epic coup d'état to the Los Angeles City Council last year.

Tears rolled, however, at Collective member Lydia Ponce's rendition of her housing plight and the way in which it paralleled so many stories featured in the Beachhead over the years of forced evictions, development-frenzy dramas, police raids on the homeless and the current witch hunt on RV dwellers.

And who can forget watching the spellbinding last moments of the Lafayette Cafe? Not so much as a pin dropped in the audience as we traveled in time, again to 1983, to a roller-skating Venice of America epitomized by the loving and jesting camaraderie of a bohemian cast of characters, rivaling, no doubt, the early days of Abbot Kinney and crew's own vision.



The Beachhead received a Certificate of Recognition from Councilperson Bill Rosendahl. Left to right: Jim Smith, Erica Snowlake, Mark Lipman, Bill Rosendahl, Krista Schwimmer, Jessica Aden, Della Franco, Don Geagan, Karl Abrams. Not shown: Lydia Ponce and Alice Stek.

Photo by Herbert B. Fishberg

Intern Jessica Aden read a poem by Rick Davidson and Don Geagan read "Venice of America" by Jane Gordon from the Beachhead's #1 Issue. Krista Schwimmer read Carol Fondiller's "The Beachhead's Back!" and Mark Lipman gave a theatrically stylized reading of the "Manifesto of Free Venice" by John Haag.

We also dramatized the paper's commitment to Peace with a flurry of anti-war poems. The night rounded with an endearing live performance of "Moon over Venice" by Santa's elven bedecked songstress Suzy Williams. The entire Collective then joined in a rousing Carol's Carol, a 70s modified version of Jingle Bells, penned by the Harpie herself. Lastly, attending writers and chroniclers of Beachheads past came up and "gave testimony."

Yo, hilarity abounding aside, in preparation for the evening and December's 40th anniversary issue, (available online), fingering the worn, yellowing original copies of Beachheads from the headquarters filing cabinet brought sighs and exclamations of wonder from us all at the sheer inexorable brouhaha of existence experienced on this human plane.

Venice, She, mystical One, is fortunate to have a fertile garden in which to reap and sow her seeds, and a group of dedicated caretakers to tend to her flesh made word. May we grow together in perpetuity!

The Beachhead's 40th is now on Google Video Go to video.google.com and search for "Beachhead's 40th Anniversary"

THANKS

A special thanks to Fred Dewey, Jim Fleck and the rest of the staff of *Beyond Baroque* for their gracious hosting of the Beachhead event, to Earl Newman for designing our 40th Anniversary incredibly beautiful poster, to Emily Winters for donating the sales of her art work to the Beachhead, and to Pegarty Long and Aaron Culberson for filming the event. Thanks also go to Cafe Collage as well as Nina and James Merced of the Fruit Gallery for donating spectacular food (and to many others who brought their home cooking) and to Dan and Jason from Groundwork's coffee for donating a most delicious brew.

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Fondiller on Sponto —continued from page six

harassment and threats from the landlord and a succession of I-think-I'll-open-up-a-quaint-little boutique-that-looks-funky-and-is-pricey would be restaurateurs.

But no matter what his troubles, people who bailed on him, cheated him, relatives who swindled him, Mark was always planning his next event.

He wanted to be part of the now prestigious Venice Art Walk. The artpreneurs who run the Art Walk turned him down.

How could this guy who sold no Bells, Arnoldis, Dills or other art Fashionistos, who was not noticed by the Bull artists of the art world, dare to aspire to heights that in the know where sophisticates and purchasers of High end art presided?

Great Robert Graham, Bull artist of Venice, Bull Gentrification, has left his Great Glaring hoof print in Venice.

His vandalizing the Columns of Windward Avenue, his so far successful efforts to close the downstairs of the Town House, a bar that has been in Venice since 1910. The downstairs was a speakeasy and was a tourist attraction and a source of Civic Pride.

And of course, THE TORSO.

I make no judgment on the artistic attributes of said TORSO, but Graham shoved it on us with the complicit aid of

Cindy Miscikowski, former unelected Councilwoman and spouse of Doug Ring, mega-lease holder in Marina Del Rey.

But Mark walked lightly on Venice.

Yes, he wanted to be recognized and rich, but he never destroyed Venice. He changed, but he kept the soul of the community. He saw and loved the edginess, the ugliness, the beauty of this community, this anarcate we call home, as long as the kindly speculators allow us to live in our inflated rent tenements and over-mortgaged and over-taxed single homes that need repairs.

I remember Mark as that golden child-man, enjoying the sun and rain, inviting me into his gallery for a taste of his sacred herb, getting me so stoned, so full of laughter, of his friends and of his generosity.

I found out that Mark's lease was up in January and it would not be renewed.

In December, Mark went into his Gallery on 7 Dudley and died.

I guess I could go all cosmic woo-woo and speculate on the 2 disparate people who were involved with art and died within days of each other.

I remember Mark and I remember remembering him that those days, they WERE the good ole days.

All I know is, sorry your lease was up old friend.

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Venice History –

Was the Annexation of Venice to Los Angeles in 1925 a good idea?

By Jeffrey Stanton

Venice, California, from the time of its founding in 1905 as a unique canaled real estate development, was a successful tourist destination and summer resort for Los Angeles residents living 14 miles inland. It developed into the Disneyland of its day, with a large network of picturesque gondola-filled canals branching from its central lagoon (where the present day traffic circle is today), a miniature railroad, that took tourists for a tour of the community, and two huge hot salt-water swimming pools. Its two enormous three-block-wide amusement piers (one at Windward Avenue, and the other from Navy Street in Venice north to Pier Avenue in nearby Ocean Park) were filled with roller coasters, dance halls, fun houses, restaurants, and an assortment of other rides and attractions.

Summer weekends were packed with several hundred thousand visitors, who arrived by electric trolleys and automobiles from Los Angeles and elsewhere. Since they each spent about \$3, the town's merchants were flush with money, often \$1,000,000, which was a lot of money during the teens and twenties. It generated enough municipal income that the city's property tax was quite low, and it financed the city's rapid growth for municipal services.

However it had a largely factional and dysfunctional city government, especially after its founder, Abbot Kinney, died in 1920.

Unfortunately the city didn't have a large enough central business district near the beach, so business districts developed near the distant city hall, near the Lick and Ocean Park Piers, near the small Center Street at Venice Boulevard, and along W. Washington Boulevard (now Abbot Kinney Boulevard). A new pier owned by roller coaster designers Prior and Church was planned to be built at the foot of Leona Street (the site of the present Venice Fishing Pier) for the 1926 summer season, and it would create a sixth business district.

Venice's Board of Trustees couldn't agree on plans to improve municipal services such as a new sewage plant, or even which streets needed to be paved. Consequently, they and the 750 member Chamber of Commerce for the February 1923 election decided to submit a change the city's charter to a city manager form of government to keep the city's business out of

politics. But before the election a petition for consolidation to Santa Monica got enough signatures to be put on the ballot. Then a month before the election the Trustees befuddled the electorate by putting \$1,600,000 in bond measures, including a new convention center



Venice in 1925. Windward Avenue pier in the foreground with lagoon (now traffic circle) and old canals. From "Venice California - Coney Island of the Pacific," by Jeffrey Stanton.

and library on the ballot. As usual all factions opposed each other's solutions and all ballot measures failed. Since they were disgusted with the Trustees, enough signatures were obtained to place annexation to Los Angeles for the July 10, 1923 election. To squash annexationists selling points the Trustees began a series of long forestalled street improvements and lifted the ban on swimming on Venice's south beaches since the new sewage purifying plant became operational. One thousand more voters went to the polls than during the Feb 1923 election. Annexation lost by 346 votes, 1,849 to 1,503.

Venice's 1924 spring election brought to power an administration that seemed bent on self-destruction. The Civic Betterment League gained a majority of the Board of Trustees. They were committed to local government only if the public confidence could be restored

to enable financing of a comprehensive series of civic improvements.

However, their ideas of improving Venice in the way of progress was to turn Venice's canal network into roads, and to pave the Pacific Electric's right of way so that automobiles could operate on a street that was too narrow for both. The canal property owners were in an uproar and a judge granted them a temporary injunction to prevent the city from destroying their neighborhood.

Unfortunately Venice, during the spring and summer of 1925, continued on a course to becoming politically impossible to govern. When a series of bond measures for public improvements totaling \$1,185,000 failed to pass in the August 14, 1925 election, the Trustees called a special annexation election for Oct 2, 1925.

Annexationists and anti-annexationists fought a bitter campaign. Signs in windows proclaimed, "Annexation Means Slavery." The 'anti' group claimed that annexation would bring Venetians "nothing but higher taxes, bossy interference with their affairs, slavery, bankruptcy, and misery. The 'pro' forces claimed that it would provide more water and a better police force, and "generally drag dear, blessed Venice out of the gutter." They pointed out that the selfish pier businessmen were only concerned that Los Angeles' stiff Blue Laws, which contained anti-gambling statues and banned Sunday dancing, would deprive them of income. The Kinney Company pledged its support for consolidation with Santa Monica if voters rejected annexation.

Out-of-towners temporarily moved into town to qualify to vote, joined the right clubs, and talked of nothing but annexation. Perhaps the residents listened, or perhaps they were willing to vote for any alternative to Venice's inept government. Annexation won 3130 to 2215. Some citizens wanted to file an injunction to stop annexation since the two cities weren't contiguous, (a gap of nearly 10 miles at the time). But no action was taken and Venice became part of Los Angeles as scheduled on November 25, 1925. Provincial Los Angeles, with its pretensions of becoming a world class city, fulfilled its dream of expanding to the Pacific Ocean by acquiring Venice.

—continued on page 10

JFK and the Unspeakable: Why he Died and Why it Matters

Written by James Douglass, Published by Orbis Press

Reviewed by Jack Neworth

This past November 22nd marked the 45th anniversary of JFK's assassination. Despite all that has been written about Kennedy and the circumstances surrounding his death, for many historians the truth has been obscured behind the twin myths of Camelot and the Warren Report.

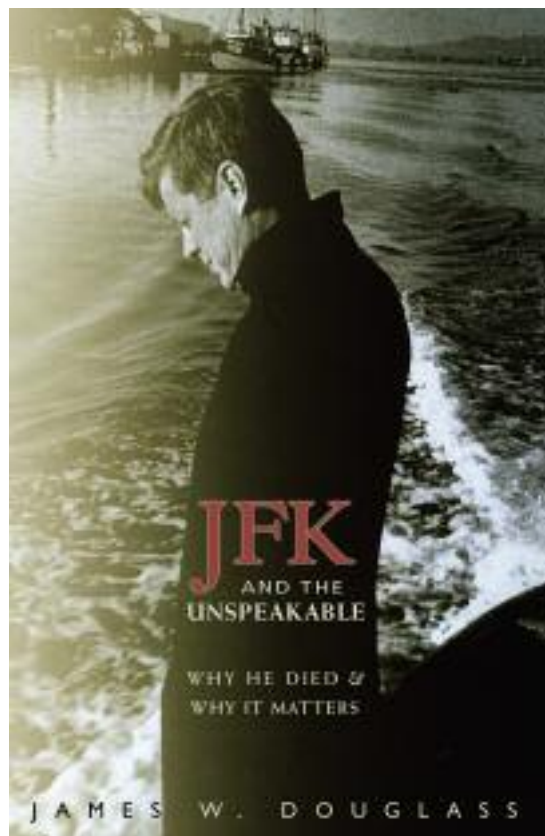
Through various biographies and magazine exposes we've learned about Marilyn Monroe, Judith Exner and other Kennedy's infidelities. We've learned of his crippling illness that was carefully covered up. And, of course, we've been inundated with theories as to how he was killed and why.

What James Douglass has managed to accomplish in his new book "JFK and the Unspeakable" is to bring to light probably the most important facet of Kennedy somehow others have missed. Douglass is almost alone in focusing on the amazing transformation of JFK from an aggressive Cold Warrior to an apostle for Peace. Twelve years in the making, Douglass's book provides compelling evidence that it was this very transformation that cost JFK his life.

Douglass is a longtime peace activist and theologian. The title of his book comes from the work of the late spiritual writer Thomas Merton (1915-1968) who defined unspeakable as "an evil whose depth and deceit seemed to go beyond the capacity of words to describe." JFK's horrific death, seen over and over on national television, and its likely cause, certainly would seem to fit the definition.

Within the Cold War atmosphere, Douglass artfully interweaves Kennedy's increasing moves toward peace with the conspiracy that was out to stop him. Kennedy's peace initiatives brought him into conflict with the hawks in his administration over Vietnam and especially with the Joint Chiefs who pushed for a preemptive nuclear strike on the Soviet Union.

The Joint Chiefs knew that we had a temporary advantage in nuclear weapons over the Soviets and wanted to attack before they could catch up. They were bolstered in their arguments by experts like Hermann Kahn



who were convinced that a nuclear war was a winnable option for America. Kennedy successfully resisted them and, it could be argued, saved civilization in the process. Research has demonstrated that even a modest nuclear exchange could cause a "nuclear winter" destroying all life on earth.

Douglass outlines the relationship between JFK's policies and his murder. Each step he made toward peace angered his enemies who would ultimately betray him. Heretofore, almost unpublicized, were JFK's back channel attempts at securing that peace. JFK and Khrushchev exchanged twenty-six lengthy and highly personal letters,

the revelation of, which are fascinating. Douglass contends that each leader, having seen the world come to the brink of nuclear annihilation, desperately wanted a lasting peace. But each was saddled with enemies within their bureaucracies that had a vested interest in the maintenance of a war machine.

Douglass traces the conflict between a president and the war machine back to the Eisenhower era. Despite having led the Allied forces to victory in WW2, Ike fell seriously out of favor with the CIA when he planned a summit meeting with Khrushchev. (Cancelled after a U.S. spy plane crashed in Russia.) Eisenhower's Farewell Address was shocking to many when he warned the nation of the perils of the military industrial complex, forces that would soon be in conflict with Kennedy.

Kennedy's first major impasse with the CIA followed the Bay of Pigs invasion which had been designed to take back control of Cuba and re-open gambling casinos to benefit organized crime JFK felt so betrayed by the agency and the Joint Chief that he told an aide he wanted to "splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the wind."

In Douglass' book we learn that Kennedy and Castro appeared dedicated to a normalization of relations. At American University on June 10, 1963, JFK spoke about a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and his resolve to form a new relationship with Khrushchev. Many at the CIA and Pentagon, however, repeatedly subverted JFK's policies. He became isolated, unable to trust high-ranking officials such as Henry Cabot Lodge, Curtis LeMay and Allen Dulles. Ironically, JFK had more faith in Khrushchev than people within his own government.

"JFK and the Unspeakable" is published by Orbis Press. The publisher and editor is Robert Ellsberg, the son of Daniel Ellsberg of the "Pentagon Papers" fame.

"JFK and the Unspeakable" is a compelling read with remarkable relevance to today, especially in light of his daughter Caroline, possibly becoming the U.S. Senator from New York. Douglass illustrates that we have tragically overlooked diplomacy to embrace preemptive war and endless militarism. His book is a must for the student of the Kennedy era and the pursuit of peace.

Poems for a New President



Uncle Sam and Aunt Emma

By Jim Smith

Sam, you're no good
everyone knows it
You act so hot because you're our uncle
but you can't get along with anyone
always starting fights
and coveting what your neighbor has

What you need is a good woman
to teach you how to live.

I have one, said Sam
You have what? I demanded.
A wife, he nearly whispered,
name's Emma
You know - New York harbor
"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."
Yada yada.

Emma Lazarus is my aunt?
I asked in shocked disbelief.
The one and only, confessed Sam

But why aren't you together? I said.
Well you know, she was always getting mad at me
for invading some place or another
and beating hell out of those union organizers
Then the McCarthy Committee got after her in the 50s.
Well, Sam's wife must be above suspicion.
So we went our separate ways.

Then what happened? When did she die?
Oh she's still alive alright.
We symbols don't die,
at least not like mortal men.

I want to see her, I said
After all she is my aunt.

Sam gave me a hard look, then said,
She's living in a little bungalow
over in Venice, by the beach.
But watch out sonny,
she'll talk your ear off.
Gave me "what for" the other day
about Guantánamo and the Patriot Act
- all that stuff - torture, wire tapping

Well, you know, you shouldn't be doing that,
I said. He scowled, but nodded his head
I know, I know. But its a dangerous world out there.

Not so! I said.
Never in history has it been safer, more civilized.
Except when you come around.

Watch yourself, sonny.
He was glaring at me now.
You're beginning to sound
like your Aunt Emma.

Sam, you and Emma need each other.
You may be a colossus, but she's got your heart
I'm makin' it my business to get you two back together.

Well, a lot of people ask about her, Sam acknowledged
And it was kind of nice to be a respected couple.

I'll give it a try, Barack.
But I ain't promisin' nothin'
I might see it your way,
but, then again, you might see it my way.

January 16, 2009

By Mark Lipman

Four more days
Four more days
Heaven help us
Four more days
On your feet
Four more days
Do not sleep
Stay awake
Four more days
Four more days
We take our country back
For all those who have come
And fallen before us
Who did not make it
But fought, so that we could see
In our lifetimes
The dawning of a new day
Four more days
Four more days
The usurper
And all his minions
Will be chased out of the house
To the throwing of shoes
In four more days.
Now the work has just begun
It is up to us
Each and every one
Starting with me and you
It is time to throw down their chains
To unbind our hands
And pick up the responsibility
Of taking this planet
In a new direction
One in where the words
"Liberty and Justice For All"
Actually stand for something
One in where the words
"Freedom and Democracy"
Are more than just slogans
One in where I can feel good
About bringing my children into
That's the world I'm talking about
Four more days.
Are you ready?
Then let me see you on your feet
Four more days
The work has just begun
Do not fall back now
And bring an extra pair of shoes
We've got a lot of walking to do
This is the beginning
Of the end
Of tyranny
But only if you get up
On your feet
But if for only once
You take to the streets
And say "No" when you witness injustice
When you stand up
For the little guy
Because it is the right thing to do
When you care
When you care enough
To help someone you don't even know
Just because
Because
Whether black, white, or brown
We all share something in common
Humanity
We are all one
With whatever God there may be
And whatever you do
Unto the least of my creatures
You do unto me.
Can I get an amen?

Inauguration Day

By Sherman Pearl

At last—the sun sauntering in
from the darkness
three centuries late.
I shower, scrub away
yesterday's grime;
my skin sparkles
in the bathroom's light.
my 5 o'clock shadow
vanishes under the razor,
along with the wrinkles;
my face turns fresh
as tomorrow.
I clear my throat
For the speech I imagine
myself delivering
on the courthouse steps;
words I rehearse in the mirror
blare like a fanfare
In conclusion
I sing God Bless America
to be sure the words
hadn't died of disuse.
it seems appropriate
to stand naked as Adam
at the beginning of things;
feels right to linger
this way, exposed
to peeping birds
and quarrelsome squirrels
I'll wear my best robe
to the easy chair
when I watch the future
unfold on TV.
Looks like a good day for it;
clouds swirling, unsure
of which way the wind
Is pushing them;
sun ducking behind them,
then bursting through

The



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Beachhead@freevenice.org
PO Box Two, Venice 90294
www.freevenice.org
Founded: Dec. 1, 1968

this paper is a
poem

Was Annexation a good idea? –continued from page 8

The big question as one looks back in retrospect at 83 years of Los Angeles government, was it good or bad for Venice? Historians are supposed to be impartial so let's look at the evidence.

Basically there was an incompatibility between the two cities from the very beginning, much like trying to mix oil and water. Venice was a laid back resort town that many considered the Disneyland of the day, created by a visionary who wanted it to resemble its namesake in Italy. Its lovely canals were incompatible with automobiles, its Venetian architecture along its business streets were arcaded with its upper floors extending over the sidewalks and didn't fit the Los Angeles building code, and its amusement piers conflicted with Los Angeles' ordinances and Sunday Blue Laws. And to those in its Dept of Recreation and Parks, the piers were eyesores that blighted nature's vistas.

Venice's amusement zone was affected immediately. When the anti-gambling statues and ban on Sunday dancing began, pier business suffered. The effect was most pronounced on the Lick Pier at Navy Street. Patrons simply spend their money at Santa Monica's adjacent Ocean Park Pier. After two danceless Sundays, amusement owners decided to campaign for a special amusement zone.

Prior and Church, who had acquired 710 feet of beach frontage between Avenue 30 and 33 and intended to build a \$1.5 million fun zone on a 1200-foot-long pier with two roller coasters, a ballroom, bathing plunge, they were denied a permit. Los Angeles was intent on acquiring all beach frontage including tidelands leases.

Venice residents became concerned when Gordon Whiteall, Director of the Los Angeles City Regional Planning Commission, declared that it would be criminal if the city allowed another bit of its newly acquired strand to become cluttered up with "hurdy gurdy piers and other obstructions which would mar the gorgeous vista of nature's handiwork." Several days later officials assured the town that the present piers would be left alone, but no new piers would be allowed. The Venice Amusement Pier's tidelands lease wouldn't expire for another 20 years.

Petitions circulated around Venice in January for an ordinance establishing a special amusement zone. The ordinance was eventually scheduled for a special April 30th election. There was a fierce debate throughout Los Angeles over the measure. Its opponents were church groups aligned with ultra-conservatives. The Venice Chamber of Commerce pointed out that Sunday was the only day a working person could get away for pleasure. Fortunately the majority voted for the special amusement zone; 112,305 for it, 77,832 against it.

Venice's citizens were irate that there was a lack of promised municipal improvements during the first few years. Their property taxes had risen to Los Angeles' higher rates. The promised paving of Trolley Way

(Pacific Avenue) was postponed, and was not completed until 1954 when California state and country gas tax revenue paid for it. Los Angeles took Venice's brand new fire truck and replaced with an inferior older model.

However, when a bond measure to improve beach access failed, the city allocated \$20,000 for the construction of a brick lifeguard headquarters on the beach at Brooks Avenue. They also bought \$4500 worth of boats and canoes from private interests to promote boating on the canals while the court case dragged on.

Judge Henry Hollzer of the California Supreme Court confirmed in December 1926 that the city had the power to fill in the canals. But the city wasn't going to pay for it. Instead they formed an assessment district of property owners and charged them for destroying their canal neighborhood. They claimed that only 62 out of 750 property owners protested. They proceeded in the summer of 1927 by legally changing the canal names to streets, and on December 12, 1927 awarded the canal fill project to the R.A. Watson Company.

Although the contract was signed, the Board of Public Works refused to execute it in January 1928. The canals had been given to Venice on condition that they be used solely as permanent waterways. The board feared that if the canals were filled they would revert to the Kinney heirs. Watson took the case to court, but the Court of Appeals refused to hear it. He then went to the California Supreme Court, which ruled in the contractor's favor. Filling in Venice's beloved canals began on June 29, 1929 and finished by the end of the year at a cost of \$636, 205.



Windward Avenue looking east from Ocean Front Walk, 1906. From "Venice California - Coney Island of the Pacific," by Jeffrey Stanton.



Italian gondoliers give excursion rides down Lion Canal (now Windward Ave.). Tent city is on the far right along the banks of Grand Canal, 1907. From "Venice California - Coney Island of the Pacific," by Jeffrey Stanton.

Venetians were becoming more frequently dissatisfied with Los Angeles city government. They were forced to grapple with a government bureaucracy physically remote and preoccupied with ameliorating the economic effects of the Depression. While they expected a fair shake after annexation, it seemed that all they got were increased taxes and little service in return.

Property taxes increased by 116 percent from 1925 to 1929, yet not one issue for local improvements was approved by the electorate during the first few years after annexation. Bond issues for the community clubhouse and auditorium were regularly defeated. However, Venice did obtain a new police headquarters in 1930 when they built one for \$100,000 on Venice Boulevard just east of the old city hall. They also built a new library structure for \$23,000 the following spring on California and filled it with \$48,000 of newly purchased books and fixtures. And finally, they took possession of the Sunset Pier at Venice Boulevard and built a 64 x 160 foot municipal bathing pavilion on the pier.

Some suggested secession from Los Angeles. Secessionists managed to obtain 12,000 signatures on petitions asking for a state constitutional amendment to hold a special election within the old incorporated city. Assemblyman Ernest O. Voight authored the amendment and it passed the Assembly 54 to 13, on June 14, 1935. The bill then went to the Senate where powerful lobbyists from the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power attempted to defeat it. Unfortunately for Venice, they were able to delay it just long enough for the Senate to adjourn before action could be taken on the bill.

Venice's remaining canals in the Strong & Dickerson tract had survived filling in because there weren't

enough residents to support an assessment, and Los Angeles wouldn't spend the money to do the job. They had become run down with badly crumbling walls and sidewalks.

When federal Works Progress Administration funds became available to repair them, the city turned them down,

while Long Beach's Naples canals were repaired. Sea water feeding the canals ran a mile and half through a polluted oil field south of Washington Street, and besides WPA funds could be better spend elsewhere, especially if the city eventually wanted to fill in the canals.

When the Kinney Company's 25-year tidelands lease for their amusement pier expired on January 13, 1946, they were dumbfounded when its landlord, The City of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation refused to renew the lease. The Depression and World War II had just ended, and a refurbished amusement pier was expected to revive Venice's tourist industry. Since it was the town's bread and butter industry. It was the key to the town's return to prosperity.

But park officials were intent on not renewing the lease because the pier conflicted with their master plan. They expected to widen the beach soon with sand sluiced up in huge pipes from the site of the Hyperion sewage plant located 7 miles south of Venice. They wanted all structures jutting out into the ocean removed. When the Kinney Company asked for a delay, through the summer season, the city claimed that numerous residents asked that the city tear down the pier immediately because they mistakenly believed that the nearby pier depressed property values. When the pier closed on April 30, 1946, it was the end of an era. The Kinney Company had until May 15th to remove anything valuable before the pier and the Venice Plunge were demolished. As to the beach, it was quarantined from contaminated water until the new sewage plant was completed in 1950.

Continued next month

Jeffrey Stanton is the author of Venice California - Coney Island of the Pacific, the definitive 288 page hardback on Venice's history with an 80,000 word text and 367 historic photos of Venice's canals, amusement piers, and historic buildings. He sells his \$50 book, which was published for the Venice Centennial in 2005, along Ocean Front Walk on weekends, or you can call him at (310) 821-2425. jeffreystanton@yahoo.com



Mystery

Evenings when the birds
are still and i doze before dreams
the silence stirs up a kind of ache,

a presence that blows through me
like the sound through a shell
abandoned by its inhabitant.

What? i reply.
Who? i wonder.
We forge an alliance.

Words drag through me,
relentless currents pulling me towards
this ache & still i resist completely.

i know what it is not:
god or love. i have tested
both & ache returns.

Death lounges beside ache
amused by my own bewilderment.
Yet, it is not death either.

Empty, ache whispers, empty.
We form a strong alliance.
And out of us, suns are born.

-krista schwimmer

House of Cards

House of Cards
All fall down

Throw up your hands
Oh My God
What a surprise
who would have thought?
Who could have known?

Throw up your hands
OMG what a surprise
who would have thought
who would have known

House of Cards
House of Cards
throw up your hands
cover your mouth
cover your eyes
cover your nose
cover your ears
cover your butt

House of Cards
all fall down
OMFG!
What a surprise!
Who would have thought?
Who could have known?

-Doug Eisenstark

repeat after me

the elites educate you
to stop thinking

the elites want you to believe what
their media tells you

the elites want tv to be
your reality

the elites want you to eat genetically altered
nutritionally empty food

the elites want you to suspect everyone
but them

the elites want unspeakable violence
as the norm

the elites fully support
toothless artistic expression

the elites want every movie to revolve around
who has the gun

the elites want music to suck

the elites want poetry to rhyme
all the time

the elites listen to your phone calls

the elites read your emails

the elites want you to work three jobs
die young, burnt out, and broke

the elites hate women and children

the elites waste limited resources
for profit

the elites want to privatize your water
after they fill it with toxic waste

the elites want impotent acts of radicalism
to passify your heart and mind

the elites destroy community and culture
by raising rents

the elites want you to shut up and stay home
before a flickering light

the elites want their religions
to kill your spirit

the elites throw out
your votes

the elites want the truth marginalized
the elites want the truth sanitized
the elites want the truth institutionalized

the elites depend on you
not believing me

-Rex Butters

Half Heartedly

By hillary kaye

The phone
rings
half way
between a talk show
half way
through a half baked article
I am half way reading
half way
to a hot bath
that is half filled.

Right between
a day dream
about the other half
of a night
that I didn't stay to see
the other half of
I answer
the phone
half heartedly.

Breaking Free

It's like diving into the sea
I explained to him
The icy shock
as the waters close over your head
your blood racing
to keep you warm

then the second shock
when you realize
that sometime/soon
you will need to breathe

and panic fills your lungs

It's what you learn here
that changes you
You think you're sinking
but you're actually breaking free

Gravity becomes irrelevant
as you abandon the terra-bound rules
to their own complications
Movement is different here
slowed yet effortless
Grace settles into your limbs
and you begin to dance

The real epiphany
is when you realize
you can still breathe
you can breathe/underwater
you can breathe/water

against all preconceptions
against all scholarly proclamations
against the dictates of centuries of dogma

and then you know
the world you lived in
was a lie

It's a matter of believing
I told him
as his eyes washed with terror

Breathe in
Breathe deeply
I did it
You can do it too

It's so much easier
when you know the truth

-Janet C. Phelan



this paper is a
poem

CommUnity Events – day by day

Thursday, January 1

• Noon - **Venice Penguin Swim Club** - The 46th annual New Year's Day plunge into the chilly ocean. Swimmers will try to complete the 500-yard swim around the buoy and back. Winners will be crowned the Penguin prince and princess. At the Venice Breakwater. For more information call 390-5700.

Friday, January 2

• 7pm - 11pm - **First Friday on Abbot Kinney Blvd** - Shops open late. Also drinks, snacks, entertainment and specials.

Saturday, January 3

• 1pm - 4pm - **Psychic Fair and Spiritual Healing Festival** - 20-minute readings of one's choice including tarot, past lives, career, palm, love life, money, and aura. 1737 21st St., Santa Monica. Admission free/readings \$10 or three for \$25. For more information 587-3536.

Wednesday, January 7

• 6pm - 10pm - Beyond Baroque - **Movies about Venice**. At 10pm - **Memorial in honor of Mark Cornfield "Sponto"** of Sponto Gallery.

Thursday, January 8

• 7pm - 10pm - Live Music by **Suzy Williams and Steve Wiseberg** - Danny's, 23 Windward Ave.

Friday, January 9

• 7pm - **Venice Town Council** - Agenda includes opposition to Venice Permit Parking at the Coastal Commission. United Methodist Church Auditorium, 2210 Lincoln Blvd. Dinner will be served at 6:30pm for small donation. www.venicetowncouncil.org



Saturday, January 10

• 11am - 1pm - **Early Learning with Families (ELF) Open House** – new and improved children's area for babies, toddlers, preschoolers. Abbot Kinney Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd.
• 11am - Parenting Workshop – learn about parenting resources in our community with Patti Oblath, Connections for Children. Abbot Kinney Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd. 821-1769; www.cfc-ca.org

Sunday, January 11

• 11am - **Memorial will be held for the beloved Mark "Sponto" Cornfield of Sponto Gallery**. Come and celebrate the life of our great friend and true Venetian. Events will be held at Sponto Gallery, 7 Dudley Ave. 399-2078.

Thursday, January 15

• 7:30am - 9am - **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** Interfaith Prayer Breakfast - With speaker Stephen Rohde, a constitutional lawyer, lecturer, writer and political activist. Suggested donation \$25 per person or \$200 for a table of ten. Calvary Baptist Church, 1502 20th St., Santa Monica; parking at St. Anne's across the street. (310) 434-4209. www.smc.edu/.

Friday, January 16

• 7pm - The Impresario presents: **Mosaic Productions 6th year anniversary in honor of Martin Luther King** - Come down and participate in the candle vigil, and enjoy music, spoken word, poetry and magik! Talking Stick Coffee Lounge, 1411c Lincoln Blvd. Free. www.thetalkingstick.net

Tuesday, January 20

• Inauguration Day for Barack Obama!!!! - One of the greatest days in history! **Bush is finally gone!**
• 7pm - 10pm - **Neighborhood Council Board Meeting**. Agenda- Discussion will be held on the last nominations for the open VNC Community Officer seat. Westminster Elementary School Auditorium. www.grvnc.org
• 8pm - **Pleasant Gehman** speaks at MESS (Media Ecology Soul Salon) - Canal Club 2025 Pacific Ave. Free. 823-3878.

Thursday, January 22

• 8pm - Mikal Sandoval presents: **Speakeasy Night** - Come down and enjoy the once-a-month music bash with Dutch Newman and the Musical Melodians. Talking Stick Coffee Lounge. \$10.

Location Guide

- Abbot Kinney Public Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd, 821-1769
- Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. 822-3006
- Burton Chace Park, 13650 Mindanao Way, Marina del Rey. marinadelrey.lacounty.gov
- Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave, 306-1854, max10@electriclodge.org
- The Good Hurt, 12249 Venice Blvd, www.goodhurt.com
- Hal's Bar and Grill, 1349 Abbot Kinney Blvd., 396-3105 - www.halsbarandgrill.com
- Oakwood Recreation Center, 757 California Avenue.
- Pacific Resident Theatre, 703 1/2 Venice Blvd. 822-8392 - www.pacificresidenttheatre.com
- SPARC - Social and Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd. 822-9560 x15.
- Sponto Gallery, 7 Dudley Ave, 399-2078.
- Talking Stick Coffee Lounge, 1411c Lincoln Blvd. 450-6052.
- United Methodist Church and Auditorium, 2210 Lincoln Blvd. (at Victoria).
- Unurban Coffee House, 3301 Pico Blvd Santa Monica.
- Vera Davis Center, 610 California Avenue.(310) 305-1865. Fax 305-0146.
- Westminster Elementary School, 1010 Abbot Kinney Blvd. (enter auditorium from Westminster Ave.) 606-2015

Get your local event listed in the Beachhead.

Send information to Calendar@freevenice.org by the 25th of the month.

(If you can afford an advertisement, please take one out - \$25)



Get an original Earl Newman-designed poster of the Free Venice Beachhead's 40th Anniversary. Small (14x22) - \$20; Large (18x28) - \$30. Free delivery in Venice. For other locations include \$2.50 for postage. Send check to Beachhead, PO Box 2, Venice 90294.

Ongoing Events

Poetry

Free Workshops & Open Readings at Beyond Baroque:

• 5pm, sign-up 4:45. - 1st Sunday Free Open Readings, except Aug., Sept., Jan. Two-poem or three-minute max.

• 8pm - Monday Night Literary and Experimental Fiction - Bring copies of sections or short pieces. With Angie Kirk.

• 8 pm - Tuesday night Creative Non-Fiction - Bring works of creative non-fiction, memoir, and prose. With Tess Whitehurst.

• 8pm - Wednesday night poetry - The West Coast's longest running, free poetry workshop. With Frankie Drayus.

• 8pm - Thursday Alt. Screenplay - Documentary, narrative, art film scripts, actor readings. Independent projects only. With Peter Coogan.

• 1:30pm - Saturday Afternoon Poetry - Bring a poem & 10 copies. With Bob Foster.

• 11am - 4th Saturday Morning Prose & Poetry - Workshop for publication. Bring 10 copies. With Annette Robinson.

Talking Stick Coffee Lounge

• 7:30pm - Every Wednesday Night - Poetry Open Mic night. www.thetalkingstick.net

Spanish

• 1-4pm - Mondays - Burton Chace Park, Marina del Rey - 310-831-2325 - Semester: \$27 (\$7 Seniors).

Theater

• 8pm - Thursday, Friday and Saturday 8pm - 3pm Sundays - Fata Morgana. A delightful comedy about a young man who encounters a night of magic with a beautiful woman. Directed by Marilyn Fox. Extended starting Jan 9 - Feb 15 - Pacific Resident Theater.

Music

• 8pm - Live music and DJ's Sun-Fri - The Brig, 1515 Abbot Kinney Blvd. (310) 399-7537.

• 8pm - Live Music Every Night - Air Condition Supper Club, 625 Lincoln Blvd. Admission varies - Ages 21 and up. www.airconditionedbar.com

• 8pm - Venice Bistro - Live music Wednesday - Sunday night. Venice Bistro 323 Ocean Front Walk

• 8pm - 11pm Sunday & 9pm - 12am Monday - Live Jazz - Hal's Bar and Grill.

• 12pm - 2pm - Every Thursday - Live Jazz & Blues- Enjoy delicious Cajun lunch and music by Joe Banks and Friends. Uncle Darrow's, 2560 Lincoln Blvd.

• Live Music Every Night - The Good Hurt -12249 Venice Blvd. Admission varies / Ages 21 and up.

Film

• 6 - 10pm - Documental - Film series - Every Monday. The Unurban Coffeehouse.

Kids

• 7pm - Every Tuesday - Pajama & Toddler Storytime - Abbot Kinney Library.

• 3:30 - 5:30pm - Ongoing until Jan. 28 - Middle School Youth Create, Explore and Perform - Enroll NOW. Venice Center for Peace with Justice & the Arts. 2210 Lincoln Blvd. 397-8820 ext.104

Free Food

• 3 - 5pm - Every Thursday - Food Not Bombs- Free food on Thursdays. United Methodist Church.

• 3 - 5pm - Every Friday - Veggie Giveaway. - Vera Davis Center. Contact Ivonne Guzman 323-867-2705.

Calendar Handmade by Jessica Aden