

# Open Spaces

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## Conservancy Receives Donation for Stewardship

Diamond Brothers, a builder/developer located in the City of Industry, contributed \$100,000 to the Conservancy in recognition of our role in the acquisition and preservation of the 160-acre Forrestal property in Rancho Palos Verdes.

The Diamond Brothers organization is the former owner of the property and had planned a residential development on the site. The property was acquired by the City of Rancho Palos Verdes in December 1996. [see related article on page 2]

In a letter notifying the Conservancy of the gift, Frank Hsu, general partner for Diamond Brothers, said "We are most appreciative of your collective efforts, particularly in showing us how we can take advantage of existing tax laws in making a charitable contribution of land, and in your efforts in speaking with the various city and state officials involved in the funding. We are hopeful that the City will eventually convey the land to the Conservancy."

The Conservancy's Board elected to contribute \$25,000 of the funds to the Planning and Conservation League Foundation, a nonprofit organization which does research related to land preservation issues. The Planning and Conservation League was responsible for placing the California Parks and Wildlife Initiative on the 1994 statewide ballot (CalPAW contained \$6 million for Peninsula land acquisition) and will be instrumental in future efforts earmarking statewide funding for land acquisition.

The remainder of the Diamond Brothers donation will be used to help fund the Conservancy's general land preservation efforts, with a major portion going to our land stewardship endowment fund.

For land trusts, organizations with small budgets and even less spare cash, endowments are an integral part of an overall land protection strategy. By investing significant sums and using the interest on those funds to pay for essential maintenance, taxes, and basic monitoring costs, the property is protected even in lean times. The principal remains to protect the property in the event of major unforeseen costs.

The Conservancy's goal is that its properties are never at risk. When fully funded, our land stewardship endowment will help protect Peninsula natural areas forever.

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## DeRoy To Assist In Open Space Management

**F**ormer Board member Loren DeRoy was re-elected to the Board at its October meeting.

DeRoy, a Rolling Hills resident and mother of two small children, has a business degree and has worked as a teacher and financial planner. She served on the Rolling Hills Estates Parks and Activities Committee for four years and chaired the Nature Center Subcommittee, which developed and implemented the concept of the George F Canyon nature trail, which was dedicated in May 1993.

"I left the Conservancy's Board to concentrate on the George F Canyon Nature Center," said DeRoy. The Center opened in June of 1996, and the Conservancy provides Contract Naturalist services to the Center.

"My primary interest is in managing open space land, and I'm happy to return to help the Conservancy as it develops its expertise in this area."

She previously served on the Board from October 1993 to October 1994. She also serves on the Wildlife Committee in Rolling Hills.

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## First Stage Reached in Forrestal Preservation

**E**scrow closed on the 160-acre [Forrestal property](#) on December 11, 1996, transferring title to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes.

The Forrestal property has some of the finest natural habitat remaining on the Peninsula. The habitat is generally in good condition, although there are some areas where human activities such as mountain biking have caused considerable damage. The property is home to several breeding pairs of California gnatcatchers and cactus wrens, as well as channel island plant species rarely found on the mainland.

The property was acquired using \$4.3 million of LA County Measure A funds and \$3.4 million from the California Wildlife Conservation Board. The Measure A funds were specifically earmarked for acquisition of "critical natural areas" in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes in the 1992 measure, which was approved by over 62% of voters.

The Conservancy led the negotiation effort, and our first objective was to secure this important habitat, which we've done with the help of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. Now, we want to set a course to maintain and enhance the habitat value of the property. We believe that this can be most economically and effectively accomplished by Conservancy ownership. Our reasons follow:

1. **Assured Future.** The Forrestal site contains some of the finest coastal sage scrub habitat on the Peninsula, and the Conservancy is committed to preserving this habitat. Ownership by the Conservancy will be an assurance to the community and to potential funding sources that this site will be preserved.
2. **Ownership & Management by Caring Individuals.** The Conservancy provides a focal point for individuals who treasure open space and its habitat areas. Funding from Measure A as well as from grants and donations will be leveraged with volunteer labor to enhance native plant communities and habitat throughout the site and improve trails and public access.

3. Lower Liability for the City. While neither the City nor the Conservancy may generally be held liable for accidents on unimproved land, there is a higher likelihood that the City, with its perceived "deep pockets," will be sued for such accidents and will end up paying associated legal fees. If the Conservancy holds a conservation easement over the property, but is not the owner, the City will remain responsible for liability issues.

4. No City Maintenance Costs. While the costs of mowing, weed abatement, and trail maintenance will remain the same regardless of ownership, as owner of the property, the Conservancy rather than RPV would be responsible for these costs.

5. No City Management Costs. The Conservancy has managed the Linden H. Chandler Preserve in Rolling Hills Estates since the Preserve's creation in 1994 and the Lunada Canyon Preserve in Rancho Palos Verdes since 1992. Using techniques used on these two properties will relieve RPV of management costs.

We hope to begin discussions with the City on the ownership and long-term management of the Forrestal property in the near future. Individuals who have an opinion on the matter should write the Conservancy or the City Manager of Rancho Palos Verdes, 30940 Hawthorne Blvd., RPV 90275.

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## Art Show Portraying Peninsula Beauty Opens April 6

**Palos Verdes Peninsula: An Artistic Interpretation** is scheduled to open April 6, 1997 at the Malaga Cove Library. The show features the works of artists Daniel W. Pinkham, Amy Sidrane, and Rick Humphrey and is a collaboration between two organizations, The California Art Club and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy as a benefit for the Conservancy.

Rick Humphrey, originator of the concept for the show, notes that "the California Art Club has had a long tradition of painting vanishing terrain as a record for future generations. This exhibition is the perfect marriage between these two groups. Our goal is to raise awareness as well as funds to support the Conservancy's critical work."

The artists began painting on location early in 1996, so the paintings will reflect the Peninsula in all seasons. Several pieces were done at night by lantern to capture the light of a full moon on an open field. Painting locations chosen for the show include Malaga Cove, Bluff Cove, Lunada Pointe, McBride Trail, Peacock Flats, Long Point, Inspiration Point, Portuguese Bend, and Shoreline Park.

According to Humphrey, "as children growing up on the Peninsula, we would roam all over the hill. These areas have special memories for us."

Painting on location, known as plein aire (out doors), can be exciting for the artist, who must contend with sudden storms, high winds or even snakes. Humphrey recalls one instance when a large screech owl, mistaking him for prey, swooped down only to turn away at the last moment. "You have to be prepared for just about anything," he notes, "but the reward you get when painting out in the open spaces is the ultimate for an artist."

As well as portraying the beauty and charm of the Peninsula, the show also promises to offer wonderful examples of impressionistic painting. Begun almost 150 years ago by such French painters as Corbet and developed further by artists such as Claude Monet, impressionism is enjoying a resurgence among art collectors today.

Artists painting en plein aire create vivid interpretations of the landscape. Rather than attempting tightly rendered or photographic images, they use color and surface textures to convey their subjects. Viewing the paintings from a distance, the short dabs of color sitting side by side come together in a single statement. Examined up close, the surface textures become an exciting array of rich color strokes painted wet into wet and take on an almost abstract quality.

The artist employs these techniques to set the desired mood. A bright, crisp, cold day might be rendered with thick, wet brush strokes to help convey the feeling of high energy, whereas a very quiet, still day might be rendered very subtly, with soft pastel-like strokes. This approach to painting tells us something of what the artist felt about their subjects and helps us

to see scenes in a fresh, new way.

Accompanying the painting will be information on the geological and historical aspects of the Peninsula. The intent is for the viewer to leave the exhibition with a much greater appreciation for the rich culture and heritage of this area.

Keep an eye out for the exhibition invitation which will be mailed in early March.

If you'd like a preview of some of the paintings to be shown at the show, visit the Conservancy's web site ([www.palosverdes.com/pvplc/pvart.htm](http://www.palosverdes.com/pvplc/pvart.htm)).

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## McBride Joins Nature Walkers On His Trail



Cliff McBride joined more than 150 walk participants at the Conservancy's December 7 [Nature Walk](#) on the trail named in his honor by the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. McBride, left in the photo, joins granddaughter Sunni Turner on the Saturday afternoon walk.

McBride, 94 years old and going strong, began working on the trail in 1979 after his wife slipped and fell while hiking. He spent more than twelve years grading the trail, moving large rocks, and improving drainage.

He noted that before he began, every rain would leave large gouges in the path, making it difficult even for hikers. He moved away from the Peninsula in 1992, and his erosion control work has kept the trail smooth and navigable in his absence.

"Cliff is an amazing person," said Bill Ailor. "I would walk the trail frequently, and Cliff would be there moving rocks weighing several hundred pounds. He was a master with levers and wedges. All of us who enjoy this excellent trail today owe a debt of gratitude to Cliff."

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## Bluff Cove: A Historical Perspective

By Tony Baker

As part of Palos Verdes Shoreline Preserve, Bluff Cove is a popular location for surfing, fishing, scuba diving, hiking and tide-pooling. Over the years it has also been known as Palos Verdes Cove, Paddleboard Cove, and by local surfers simply as "The Cove."

Archaeological digs at nearby Malaga Cove recovered evidence showing that the area is one of the earliest inhabited sites known in California, dating back some 6,500 years. It is believed that the Gabrielino Indians who lived there referred to their village as Chowingna. Other sites discovered near Lunada Bay and Point Vicente indicate that the area around Bluff Cove was well populated before the arrival of the Spanish. Due to its abundance of natural resources, especially shellfish and seaweed, it can be assumed that Bluff Cove was frequented by these native inhabitants.

In October 1514, an expedition led by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed from Mexico to explore the coast of California, in search of the mythical Straits of Anian which the Spanish believed connected the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The ships "Victoria" and "San Salvador," after having anchored in San Pedro Bay, sailed around the Palos Verdes Peninsula past the cliffs of Bluff Cove.

### Hills Impress Spaniards

The brown hills of autumnal Palos Verdes must have impressed the Spaniards with their natural beauty, while also reminding them of their Mediterranean homeland. Anchoring over night in Santa Monica Bay, Cabrillo considered going ashore, but decided against it, and sailed the next day on what became an ill-fated voyage. Had Cabrillo and his crew landed ashore, they would have been greeted by friendly, but cautious native people.

Eighty-eight years later, Sebastiano Vizcaino sailed near the coast, but in a dense fog. It was at least 150 years before another European vessel came close to the Peninsula, so the ships, or "big houses on the sea," became a legend to the native people.

In 1769 an overland expedition led by Gaspar De Portola passed through the Los Angeles basin and led to the founding of the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel in 1771. The local Indian people, now known as the Gabrielinos (from the mission name), were assimilated into the mission system, but were soon decimated by diseases to which they had no immunity. Because their culture virtually disappeared over a relatively short time period, much knowledge of these people has unfortunately been lost.

### **Mystery Stones Uncovered**

A mystery of historical importance was uncovered in the waters off Bluff Cove when divers from Redondo Beach discovered a pile of about 50 stones, each weighing between 280 and 1,000 pounds, with smooth holes through the center. Although the origin of the stones is uncertain, they are known locally as the "Chinese Anchors."

One theory to explain their presence posits that they were deposited when a Chinese junk sunk some 3,500 years ago. Since the mineral content of the stones is consistent with formations in China, and stones such as these were used there as anchors, some historians believe this to be proof that the Chinese discovered America long before Columbus.

Another theory proposes that they were used by Portuguese whalers to anchor whale carcasses off shore. Other theorists believe they were fashioned to be used as anchors by local fishermen of Chinese descent during the 19th century. The stone matches that of the Monterey Formation found on the Peninsula making this a plausible explanation. The divers did not reveal the exact location of the stones, but provided a stone for display at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center.

### **"Douglas Cut" Blasted**

Bluff Cove became more accessible to visitors in 1923 when the road bed for Palos Verdes Drive West was blasted through the cliff face. It became known as the "Douglas Cut" after a surveying marker was found with the name Douglas on it. More than 20,000 people came to watch the explosion in which 60 tons of blasting powder were used.

The blasting caused some redistribution of rock and was responsible for altering the shoreline. The job was a difficult one because the cliff is the highest along the coast of the Peninsula, and mule teams were needed to pull the scoops and wagons to haul the dirt. By 1926 a circular route around the Peninsula was completed at a cost of \$90,000. A celebration followed in which 300 automobiles drove from Redondo Beach to San Pedro on the new highway.

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## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **Land Use in America**

Henry Diamond and Patrick Noonan, Island Press 1996

Those of you who are avid readers might consider adding "Land Use in America" to your reading list. The book, written by Henry Diamond, senior partner at Beveridge & Diamond, the country's largest environmental law firm, and Patrick Noonan, the founder and chairman of the Conservation Fund, a national land conservation organization, discusses the reasons why we have no comprehensive strategies regarding land use in this country and why we need them.

Land use strategies would help communities respond to population and growth pressures without having to sacrifice natural resources and the quality of life that make these areas desirable places to live.

"Over the last 25 years, Americans have all but ignored the basic fact that a strong economy, healthy environment, and enjoyable quality of life depend on the land," the authors write. As we have grown and expanded, they continue, "we have treated our land as an afterthought, incidental to our quality of life."

The authors state that today, as a result of this shortsighted attitude, the quality of life in many of the country's cities, towns, and neighborhoods is suffering. Sprawl, pollution, and unsafe neighborhoods, are just a few of the negative consequences that have resulted from our failure to address this issue.

They go on to say that in order to reverse this trend, we must foster coordination between all levels of human activities, and encourage a new kind of ethic whereby corporations, individuals, and governments adopt more responsible land stewardship habits and programs. For example, transportation and zoning plans should foster responsible land stewardship habits by encouraging the use of built-up vacant lands for new development rather than continuing expansion to the urban fringe.

Such remedies are full of common sense, but fraught with political intricacies. To address such issues the authors call for state and local leadership, flexible land-development rules, and more community involvement.

Focusing primarily on privately owned lands in and near communities, the authors point out that the most radical and successful changes in land use approaches and policies are happening as a result of community-based efforts. In towns and cities across the country, concerned citizens are mobilizing partnerships around key natural and cultural resources to press for better land use.

The land trust movement, for example, is heralded by the authors for its ability to work across political boundaries, and personal philosophies, and come up with creative solutions to land use conflicts.

The authors offer a list of recommendations to help concerned communities accommodate growth in "better, more environmentally sound, most fiscally responsible ways." Those of you interested in knowing more about what can be done will find this book comprehensive and thought-provoking.

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## Bees and Trees

By Joseph K. Slap

**I**n Banff National Park, I have seen trails that have been made by wapiti (elk) in their regular walking trips to feeding sites. Other mammals, including we Homo sapiens (and even wee Homo sapiens), have also made trails for ease of walking through various types of terrain.

Two types of walking invertebrates, ants and termites, have long been known to make and use trails. It's rather unusual, in fact, for a nature-loving person to state that he or she has never seen an ant trail.

Members of many bee species, of course, follow scent trails while flying. During 1995, studies of a colony of the Amazonian bumble bee, *Bombus transversalis*, revealed that this bee also makes and uses walking trails.

The bee colony, consisting of about 350 workers and one queen, was in its early growth phase, and some of the colony's workers were involved in gathering the necessary materials for the colony's nest and in building that nest. That group of workers, from time to time, left the partially constructed structure and walked, one after another, along one of the two forest floor trails which they had previously cleared of debris and low growth. They continued to maintain the trail, cutting away new debris with their mandibles.

The two trails went in opposite directions, and each led to a supply of fallen leaves. Over a period of time, the human

observers occasionally dropped bits of twigs and leaves on portions of the trails. That litter was spotted by bees within 5 minutes and began to be removed by the bees within the next 10 seconds.

Of the natural trail litter, and the litter that the observers had intentionally dropped onto the trail, the bees were seen pushing some to the edges of the trails and some toward the nest. Those bee actions maintained the trails and put the litter in locations easily accessible to the workers. Some of the bees grasped bits of litter with their mandibles, and flew back to the nest with those pieces.

Now, about trees. Their leaves tell us a lot regarding the environment in which the trees and their leaves evolve and grow. In fact, when there is great seasonal variation in temperature, precipitation, light intensity and other factors, the leaves will change from season to season.

A study of shrubs in Central America found that some shrubs produce drought-resistant leaves just prior to each yearly dry season. In large trees, the environment for leaves is quite different at different heights and at different distances from the trunk because of the differences in light intensity, humidity (e.g., from a wet ground), wind speed, etc.

In many tree species, those micro-environmental conditions result in leaves at different locations having different structural and biochemical properties. For example, leaves in the most shady portions of a tree tend to be thinner than those at the canopy top in order to absorb light more easily and to avoid absorbing excess moisture.

We, here in the South Bay area, can learn a lot about trees and shrubs by carefully looking at the changes that occur from season to season, and by studying the differences in leaves at different locations. The leaves of plants at Point Vicente, although not all alike, vary even more from those at Madrona Marsh, for example.

So, friends, have fun enjoying our beautiful open spaces. Look for those ant trails and enjoy the flora.

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## **Spirit of the Peninsula Telethon Brings Funds**

**T**he Conservancy received over \$500 from the Spirit of the Peninsula Telethon held in September. The yearly event sponsored by CAP (The Community Association of the Peninsula) benefits local nonprofits. Special thanks to the Boston Market, the Hanging Tree Gallery at The Shops at Palos Verdes, and to Board members Shirley Borks and Barbara Dye for contributing items auctioned on behalf of the Conservancy.

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## **Leverage Your Donation: Use Gift Matching**

**A** number of companies will match annual, monthly, payroll deductions earmarked by you for gifts to nonprofits like the Conservancy. Just ask your personnel office for a matching gift application. Fill it out and send it to us. We'll take care of the rest.

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