



Palos Verdes on the NET Creates History

By Carrie Yamato Peninsula News (Dec 9 2004)

Palos Verdes on the NET Director Ted Vegvari plays back one of several taped interviews he has with descendents of Palos Verdes early builders and developers.

Dr. Carlo Davis, son of Walter Davis who designed La Venta Inn, explains how the art jury turned down some of his dad's designs and how his father remained a little bitter. "My dad was disgusted by what he saw the art jury allowed ... He said it was not true to [the development's] original plans."

For the past eight months, Peninsula resident Maria Bauer and Vegvari have been scouring local history rooms and tracking down children of early developers and residents to compile an accurate history of the Peninsula.

To date, they have contacted Davis, the son of the first mayor, the daughter of one of the original landscapers, the daughter of Farnham Martin and the daughter-in-law of Frank Vanderlip. They have also received photos and letters from people whose families were a part of the Palos Verdes Project.

"Every minute that ticks by, history is lost," said Vegvari. "Second-hand stories will soon be gone. We want to get the stories straight from the people before it is lost. This story should have been told 30 years ago."

History of the Hill

The "History of the Hill" video will begin with the Vanderlip's purchase of the land in 1913, and continue through its development in 1940. Vegvari plans to tell the story through images, artifacts, photos, letters, newspaper clippings and interviews.

"The tape could be one hour or two, or maybe in several parts," said Vegvari.

"The story will determine the length. We have a list of questions we ask, but the gems are found when [the interviewee] leaves that path."

Bauer, who did research for Rancho Palos Verdes' official city video, discovered a few gems in the local history rooms as well.

"I have read a lot of Peninsula history, but some of the people involved were more colorful and controversial than I had known," said Bauer, a Peninsula resident since 1980. "I was fascinated by E.G. Lewis. He promoted this place like a Hollywood production. His involvement is a little underrated because he ended up in jail, and history is always written by the victor, but he played a substantial role."

Vegvari says he was surprised that almost every person he interviewed spent at least 25 percent of the conversation talking about the beauty and special qualities of the Peninsula.

"It's the Hill effect," said Vegvari. "If you live here for two to three years, the less you feel obliged to go elsewhere. If you spend 10 to 20 years here, you really appreciate the things that you don't have to leave the Hill for."

As anxious as Vegvari is to make the video available to the public and city halls, he isn't putting pressure on himself or his team to complete it by a certain time. His main concern is gathering as much accurate information as possible.

"The deadline is open-ended, but in a perfect world, we hope to have it finished sometime next year and have the four cities view this as the official history and

adopt it as their story," said Vegvari. "We don't have ulterior motives nor do we want to create controversy. We just want to record the story and show it in an interesting way."

If you have photos, stories, letters or information about early Palos Verdes, contact PV on the Net at history@palosverdes.com.