

LAGUNA BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 1526, LAGUNA BEACH,
CALIFORNIA, 92652

1994 - FALL

OCTOBER 1994

The Historical Society is a non-profit, tax-exempt, non-political community organization committed to preserving the places, things, and memories of Laguna.

Board Members

Belinda Blacketer Pres.	497-4439	Nelda Stone - Sec.	494-5268
Pauli Buzan - Treas.	494-7870	Jane Janz	499-4976
Ed Perry	497-2207	Anne Frank	494-2318
Eric Jessen		499-2131	

CALENDAR of EVENTS

October 11, Tuesday Evening, Board Meeting at 7:30 pm .

October 15, 60th Anniversary Party at the High School with Sock Hop. Everybody welcome.

October 16, Sunday Morning at 9:00 am. Hike to Indian Cave with Corkey Smith.

October 21, Homecoming Game and Barbecue at High School.

October 27, Thursday Evening, 7:30 - 9:00 - General Meeting at Indian Territory, at 305 North Coast Highway. Len Wood, owner, will share with us his "Museum of the First People".

October 27, 1 year Anniversary of the fire. Various activities all week, see local paper.

Please join us. We invite everyone to our meetings. We love your support and participation.

Our Past 1946

(by Pauli Buzan)

Late in 1945, I applied for a job at the local telephone company. It was known as the Associated Telephone Company Limited. Laguna was an isolated system



1945- Who do you know ?

between Pacific Bell to the north, south and east. It was at the present site at the corner of Broadway and Beach Street. The building was then only one story high.

A manual system was in place. To place a call you lifted up your receiver, a light would shine on the switchboard and the operator would plug in and say "Operator". You would then give her the telephone number to which you wished to be connected. To place a call outside of Laguna, you gave the Operator the City and the number, then she would transfer you to a teletypist who would take your number, and number you were calling.

She would tell you she would call you when the connection was made. The teletypist would telegraph the information to Santa Ana where the call was completed and when the party you wanted was on the line, the operator in Santa Ana would call back and connect you. Laguna had two lines going out (for emergency only) and about eight lines coming in. All long distance cables were processed by the Santa Ana Bell Company.

My first job was as a teletypist. Shortly thereafter new long distance lines were installed and eventually the teletype machines were eliminated and the operators began to place calls directly.

There were very few main lines. The party lines ran from two to eight on a line. Each jack could accommodate four lines. It took two jacks for an eight party line. Eventually I was promoted to be the night operator, which I did for 17 months.

I became one of Laguna's "Night People", joining taxi drivers, hotel clerks, police officers, firemen, etc. We were sort of a family, connected by the phone line.

The night operator had additional duties besides connecting people. All the long distance calls were tabulated by the operators connecting the calls. They had to record the time the party was connected and disconnected. Then



The Switchboard Operators

she had to compute the charge which also meant she had to know the different rates.

Calls outside Orange County were processed through the Santa Ana Long Distance System. The night operator had to check all the tabulations of that day's long distance calls. The shift ran from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. From 11:00 pm to 6:00 am the night operator was the only link from Laguna Beach to the rest of the world.

When preparations were being made for the dial system, the building was expanded. Wm. Griffith was in charge of the construction. The project took over two years because they kept getting into trouble since the weight of the two story structure was too much due to the fact that the property was located on fill over the original Laguna Canyon Creek slough.

While construction proceeded it was cold at night. They built a plywood shell around the room where the switchboard was located and all construction continued on the outside.

About this time the name was changed to General Telephone Company. Later it was taken over by Sylvania Corporation and became part of the current entity, GTE California, Inc.

Many of the operators, linemen, and office personnel are still in the area. Hopefully we will get together a program on the phone company where we can get all these people to tell us stories of the exciting days when phone service did not mean the "information highway."

TOUR OF NATIVE AMERICAN SITE- OCT. 16th

Corky Smith, the speaker at our July meeting and local expert on Native American Life in Laguna Beach, has agreed to lead a tour to the cave and surrounding area in the Sycamore Hills area of Laguna Canyon where he conducted his archeological research on Native Americans for his M.A. thesis at CSU Fullerton in the 70's.

The tour is limited to 15 people and will take place on Sunday, October 16, 8:30-10:30 in the morning. The hike is approximately 1½ miles, round trip and not difficult. Participants should wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt, hiking boots or closed shoes, and bring water and a snack.

Please call Anne Frank, 494-2318 or 856-4968 to reserve a place. Carpooling can be arranged, or we can meet by the entrance of Sycamore Hills in the Canyon.

MURPHY-SMITH BUNGALOW REPORT

F.L. "Doc" Blacketer is continuing to work on the house. The unseasonable heat all summer slowed the work to mornings only. But we are plugging along.

The inside is done. The fence is down and the weeds are gone.

July 13th and 14th we got approval of the use, sign, and design review for the handicapped ramp and paint colors.

Now we paint the outside, put up the fence and ramp and landscape.

When Last We Met

Our last General Meeting was on July 21, 1994, Thursday at 7:30. Corky Smith, our own resident expert, presented the topic "Native Americans in the Laguna Area". Artifacts were shown, and it was a wonderful evening. Approximately 30 people attended and enjoyed the meeting.

MEMBERSHIP

You will receive a Membership Card in the Mail. Your membership Card will act as your yearly pass for two persons to the house. This is because in order to receive a property tax exemption we cannot charge a fee to visit the house. Therefore we will gladly accept donations.

Fall General Meeting

Our October 27th General Meeting is at Len Woods Indian Territory at 305 North Coast Highway at 7:30 pm.

The gallery contains The Museum of the First People, which features basketry and artifacts of the Southern California Cahuilla and Kumeyaay.

Len Wood, owner of Indian Territory Gallery, will lecture on the subjects of California basketry, antique Navajo textiles and it will be an interesting evening.

Len's father, Dr. Leonard Wood, Sr. was a medical doctor who took a personal interest in the welfare of Cahuilla

Indians on the Morongo reservation near Banning, California. Accompanying his father onto the reservation, Len's early contact began a life-long interest in Indian cultures.

Dr. Wood, Sr. practiced in Laguna on Laguna Avenue. Len has been a dealer in antique American Indian art since 1963.



Presidents Message

Lately I've felt very melancholy. Then I realized that it is because the one year anniversary of the fire is coming up.

I have to admit that when I heard that people were organizing events to commemorate the event I thought it was in bad taste. However, I've changed my mind. We do need to remember, and try to find the good things that happened.

There was no one within the city who was not affected by the fire. Whether you lost everything, or just thought you had, for 24 hours few of us knew what the fates had in store for us.

Many of you couldn't get home. Most of us had to evacuate. Those that got stuck here didn't really know what was going on either. The news reporters didn't know what they were looking at, so reported that areas were burning that weren't. If your answer phone still

answered, it meant your house was still standing.

I lived over the antique store on Ocean Avenue, next to the Marine Room. At 11:25, my sister Maren (who was working that day and lived with my father in Laguna Canyon) got a phone call from a neighbor. She said "The Canyon's on fire, I have to go" and ran to her car.

I called Richard Lucas at Laguna Canyon Kennels to see if they needed help. He did, as they had to evacuate the dogs and cats, because the fire was burning directly across the street.

I left Kathy Cobrin to run the store, and drove out to the kennel. Dr. Rose Ekberg had arrived, John Alabaster came with his van, and many others in the neighborhood and Kim and Richard put the dogs and cats in carriers and we all ferried them to the back yard of Joel and Lorraine's house on Thalia Street. There were 36 dogs and 16 cats.

They had closed the Canyon so I couldn't get back out to help my dad and my sister.

I called the kennel and Richard said they were on the roof with hoses, but that the fire was on the north side of the Canyon, and the wind was picking up.

By 2:30 the sky was black and the smoke was thick. The fire was headed for North Laguna. Maren and my dad arrived with some of their belongings and we unloaded the stuff into the store. We closed. Maren insisted it would jump the canyon at the big bend, I told her she was crazy. An hour later she was proved right. We closed the store and watched the hills burn. My brother Jared delivered my nephews to the store. Naomi and the baby would come later when Jared could get them out of the Canyon.

Lorraine called, and said they were being evacuated and what should we do with the dogs. I told her I couldn't get there as the streets were clogged with cars leaving town. She and Joel carried the dogs and cats out to Thalia Street and begged people coming down the hill to take one and drop it off at the animal hospital in Laguna Niguel. Few refused, and every dog and cat was safely taken away from the fire. People who live here are really wonderful.

About 5:00 the fire came over the ridge of Mystic Hills and swept down behind the city hall. The police and fire command posts were set up on Main Beach. Many dogs evacuated from North Laguna by neighbors were tied up to parking meters in the street. The smoke was so thick that Maren brought them in and tied them to jewelry cases. I had 3 parrots in the Laundry room and assorted people in the store. By 7 pm we had 20 adults, 4 children, 8 dogs, 4 cats, and 3 birds. The Marine Room was packed.

I walked over to Main Beach and asked if we should evacuate. I was told we would never get out of town and to put a sign on the door saying who was upstairs. If the wind changed direction again, we were to take everyone into the surf.

I spent the night on the roof, portable phone in hand answering calls from friends who wanted to know what was really happening. It rang every 5 minutes. It was hard not to be scared. In the dark it was difficult to tell what was and wasn't burning, and every time another house caught fire, there was an explosion in the darkness. The fire had a life of its own.

The helicopters flew from the hills over the roof and scooped water from beyond the surf in huge canvas bags hanging below them and as they flew back to the hills a mixture of ash and

saltwater rained on us. Embers the size of my hand swirled down on us. It was hard to breath, and the fire seemed to dance around us.

The streets were empty, except for tired and soot covered firepersons from everywhere, sleeping on the hard concrete sidewalks along coast highway, with fire trucks parked diagonally in front of them. It seemed like the end of the world. And for many it was, at least for a while.

In the dawn light, the hills were white with ash, the skeletons of too many homes reaching to the sun, everything and everyone covered with ash of destruction.

Thursday Laguna was a ghost town. Smoke swirled, hot spots flared, we listened to the wind, and watched the TV. The Canyon Acres neighborhood I had grown up in was gone. The house I grew up in was burned to the ground. Friends and relatives had lost everything. But they had not lost everyone.

Laguna isn't just a place, with buildings. Laguna is really the people that inhabit it. I drove through Canyon Acres, and Mystic Hills last week and the rebuilding is amazing. Much faster than after the Oakland Fire, for there are many places Oakland where it still looks like it happened last week.

We are lucky to have each other. We are lucky to be able to help each other. I hope we keep that in mind as this anniversary comes and goes. Laguna is a Very Special Place, no matter what disaster strikes.

Now, please write your story, and mail us a copy so we can put a book together on the experiences of Laguna's people.

**St. Francis
By-The-Sea
Seeking Funds**
(By Anne Frank)

St. Francis-by-the-Sea, American Catholic Cathedral Chapel, one of two buildings in Laguna Beach on the national Register of Historic Places, is faced with the need to raise approximately \$30,000 to retrofit its unreinforced concrete structure to meet standards for seismic safety. Ironically, the cathedral was originally built from the rubble of the 1933 Long Beach earthquake.

This cathedral is a tiny architectural jewel in our midst, which badly needs an angel or angels. It is located next to St. Mary's Episcopal Church on Park Avenue.

St. Francis received some degree of national fame in 1984 when it was listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the "world's smallest cathedral."

However, it was its unique and eclectic architecture and interior design which made it worthy of the National Register.

Symbolizing the many influences affecting American Catholic Church doctrines in the 1930's, the building's appearance represents the theosophical beliefs which characterized the Laguna Beach church until the 1960's.

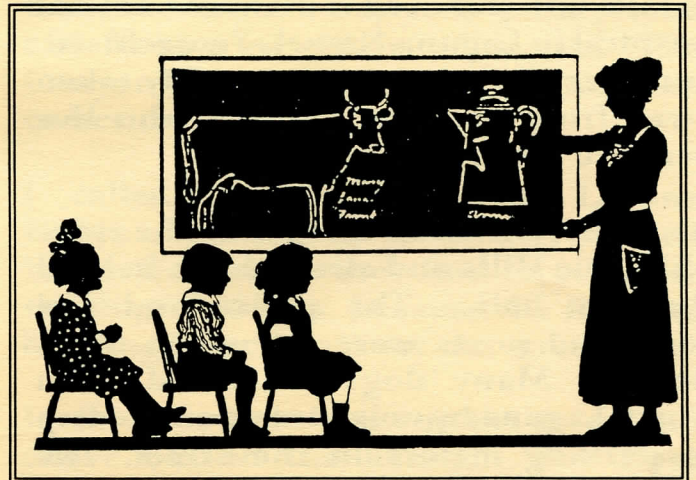
All donations are welcome, tax deductible, and can be sent to the church at its mailing address:

P.O. Box 577,
Laguna Beach, CA. 92652

For further information about the project, please contact Richard Norris at the Cathedral Chapel of St. Francis, at 497-4678.

To help raise funds local artist, Tom

Swimm, is offering the proceeds from the sale of his original oil painting of St. Francis By-The-Sea to the retrofiting fund. Inquiries about the \$5,000 painting may be made of Mr. Swimm at 497-9667, or to the church.



**Laguna Beach
Alumni Association**

School Power has formed an Alumni Association of former attendees and graduates of Laguna Beach High School.

1994 marks the 60th year of opening of Laguna Beach High School. The first seniors graduated in 1934, and the first 4 year class (1938) started that year.

Two events have been planned to commemorate the school and the recent renovation project.

The first is October 15, Saturday Evening with a dance at the high school gym.

On October 21, a Friday Evening, a barbecue before the Homecoming Game will be held.

For more information, call the Alumni Association at 497-1983.

LYNN and THELMA It all started in Laguna

From the pen of Lynndon Aufdenkamp.
This little personal memoir is a jewel.

It was written by Mr. Aufdenkamp, a long time member of the Water Board and long time Lagunian about his life in Laguna, his wonderful and talented wife who still lives in Laguna Hills, and their career as show people touring across country and on Broadway.

Its description of Laguna and it's inhabitants gives us an interesting portrait of Laguna in the teens, twenties, and thirties.

Thelma Farman Aufdenkamp was the grand daughter of Nate and Catherine Brooks.

Lynn came to Laguna in 1914 when he was 10 years old. He and his parents opened a two lane Box-Ball outdoor bowling alley at 255 Forest Avenue. They lived in a tent on the back of the lot.

The Lynn family built the first movie theater in Laguna. First on Forest Avenue in 1916, then on the site of our present movie theater about 1920. In 1935, the New Lynn Theater opened on the site of the old one. (The old one was rotated and moved to face Ocean Avenue.) This theater was built to house the talkies.

Thelma Aufdenkamp will allowed us to reprint the book, and we hope to have copies available in November in time for Christmas gifts.

The High School Renovation

Laguna Beach High School opened in 1934. The Auditorium was built as a WPA (Works Program Administration)

Project.

The classrooms around a central quad was a modern design, and highly touted. The library, cafeteria and upper classrooms were built in the late 1950's, about the same time as the pool which was located between the auditorium and the gym.

The foot ball field used to face the other way, and the "home" bleachers were reached by a steep staircase along Wilson Street.

The Gymnasium had a dignity which was over shadowed by the new gym which was built in the 60's.

Across Park Avenue (where the tennis courts and the new pool are located) was the site of the original "new" Elementary School. The Tennis Courts were our playground and the first "Boo Blast" was held there.

In 1952 or 53 El Morro Elementary opened and we were all bussed to our "new" school. The old elementary school became Thurston Junior High School, for 7th and 8th graders. It later shared the Cafeteria, Gym, and pool at the High School.

Guest Writers Wanted

Do you have a story to tell or an area of interest regarding Laguna History. We would be happy to include it in the newsletter. Please send your 300 words or less to the P.O. Box.

If we can use it we will. If you don't like to write, I'll be happy to rewrite it for you, after checking the facts with you.

Please feel free to contribute. We are happy to give credit where credit is due.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

NAME: _____ **SEX:** _____

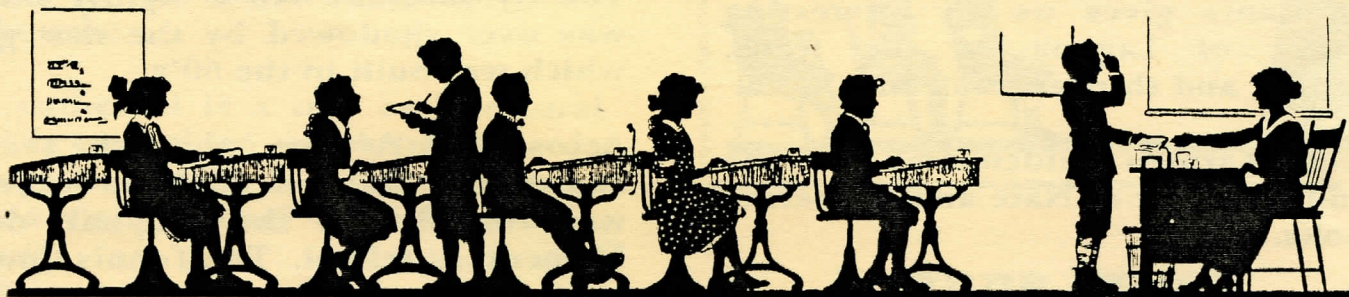
ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

PHONE#: _____ **OCCUPATION:** _____

VOLUNTEER TO: _____

MEMBERSHIP DONATION: \$15.00 _____ **2 YEARLY PASSES TO SMITH HOUSE**



**LAGUNA BEACH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1526,
LAGUNA BEACH,
CALIFORNIA
92652**

Address Correction Requested:

Members:

The last year you paid is indicated on your label.

Dues are due each January.