

A 50-Year History 1961-2011

by Kerri De Rosier

This history was extracted by poring over scrapbooks lovingly maintained by PLA Historian Klonie Kunzel, and from interviews with some of the people who have dedicated their lives to our community. In both, I found optimism, heroism, doggedness, activism, and love for our beautiful community. Like Klonie Kunzel said, why there aren't 10,000 PLA members is beyond me.

It's hard to piece together PLA's history without delving into other community issues that PLA didn't necessarily lead – but certainly weighed in on. Issues such as the airport, NTC Re-use, America's Cup Harbor, re-opening Dana Middle School, and sewage treatment, of all things.

And PLA has persevered – and experienced *deja vu*. While reviewing the scrapbooks, I found myself shaking my head – we've been working on some of the same issues for years: homelessness, traffic, newsracks, girlie joints, billboards, graffiti, and undergrounding utility lines. Like Dick Lareau said many times during our interview, "It makes you want to cry." But you can also get teary just thinking about what our community would look like if the PLA didn't exist.

With the timeline are interviews with Klonie Kunzel, Dorothea Laub, Janet Richards, Norm Magneson, Karen Davis, the Mean Green Team, Dick Lareau, King Boyd and Patti Adams. I had expected to hear a lot about how the PLA has changed over the years. It really hasn't. The PLA has remained true to its original mission – beautification and improving our quality of life. Sure, the PLA changed its name from Point Loma Village Beautiful to reflect that we were moving beyond the Village. Like Dick Lareau said, we went from a group of "do gooders without a plan" to one with plans and credibility. We learned to invite everyone to the table.

At the end of our interview, Dick Lareau leaned across the table and said, "All it takes is YOU and ME."

Point Loma
ASSOCIATION

Celebrating 50 Years of Community Service



Point Loma Village Beautiful

Founders:

Betty Bowman
Mrs. Brasier Burnham
Larry Duff
Helen James Fane
Louise Flentye
John Gilchrist
Barbara Hallen
Don Hartley
Fritz and Klonie Kunzel
Kay North
Alice and Charles Patrick
Del Burnham Rice
Janet Richards
Celeste Trepte
Bob Wallace
Tom Wilson

This timeline represents only a fraction of what the PLA has done; for a full text version, go to:

www.pointlomaassociation.com

1961

First meeting of a small group in the back room of 'The Quarter Deck.'

1964

San Diego Magazine publishes "Which will it be, Point Loma, Beauty or a Billboard Beast?" That's when Celeste Trepte said: "We have made up our minds that to make Point Loma beautiful will be just a long, slow time-consuming thing."

9/29/64 – The first Annual Dinner raises \$1900 for 64 jacarandas and a periodic newsletter and brochure. \$25/couple for gourmet steak dinner and charter membership in Point Loma Village Beautiful. 200 Charter Members.

PLA Chairs

1961-63 Larry Duff
1963-65 Donald Hartley
1965-66 Eugene Trepte
1966-67 Robert Taylor
1967-70 Fritz Kunzel
1970-71 Tom Shumaker
1971-73 Stephen Brasher
1973-75 Robert Wallace
1976-77 Marshall Dornin
1977-79 Charles Patrick
1979-81 Paul Hartley
1981-85 King Boyd
1985-86 Ann Jackson
1986-87 King Boyd
1987-89 Richard Lareau
1989-90 Norm Magneson
1990-93 Larry Baumann
1993-94 Jackie Mann
1994-95 Mark Bitterlin
1995-96 Ray Broady
1996-97 Joy Frye
1997-99 Hugh Story
1999-01 Wayne Raffesberger
2001-03 Marty Dine
2003-05 John Calabotta
2005-07 Patti Adams
2007-09 Bill Klees
2009-11 Tony Calabrese



"PLA Queen" Celeste Trepte at the 100th Anniversary Festa Parade

Klonie Kunzel & Dorothea Laub

I began the interview with Klonie and Dorothea and asked how the PLA has changed over the years. "We were doing political things from the beginning," said Klonie. "We were not a social group. In 1966 or so, Don Hartley became the force behind Point Loma Village Beautiful."



Dorothea with her 2009 Lighthouse Award

"Now – we have to raise more money," said Klonie. In the early days, when we had \$2000 in the bank, we felt we were rich. ...Raising money has been our biggest issue. We managed to do a lot without a lot. For our first project, the bottle brush plants were donated by the City, and we got the planters at cost."

"It's always been about benches, flowers and trees," said Dorothea. "We haven't changed. The meetings are the same – we have the same issues. It's not to say that we haven't taken on new projects such as the concerts, banners, and utility boxes – but we haven't strayed from our focus."

Dorothea was successful in getting the first Point Loma Association sign installed. "The city fought and fought against the sign," said Dorothea. It was Dorothea's handwriting on the sign.

Dorothea talked about the "Point Loma Implementation Committee." Prospective builders were required to come to the committee to get its blessing. Dick Lareau led the committee to create a Design Rulebook "for improving the looks of Point Loma's Village, the Rosecrans Commercial strip in particular," said Dorothea. The rules applied to landscaping, signs, architecture and the automobile.

I found the guidebook called "PLVB Design" in one of the scrapbooks. On landscaping: "It pays a thousand to one return." On signs: "Most objections to signs really stem from the fact that they are so monstrously out of scale with their surroundings in order that they may be read from a speeding auto. But our Point Loma Village traffic is not high speed. ...We should have a village of shops not a village of signs." On architecture: "Simple, graceful buildings in response to the marina – that's what we are looking for."

Dorothea remembered the first dinners, which weren't always fundraisers. For a long time, the

PLA depended solely on memberships and generosity. "We didn't spend any money on decorations. For the centerpieces, we stole flowers from our neighbors."

Like today, membership was an issue. "You could get them to go to the dinner," said Dorothea, "but they wouldn't join." "We need to find a way to reach out to the community," said Klonie. "People seem to want to know what's going on – but they won't put the money out. It's absurd that we don't have 10,000 members! We need a casual outreach event to reach the younger crowd – not a fundraiser."



Klonie Kunzel

1965

At the second Annual Dinner, Frederic Chase, ED of Los Angeles Beautiful, suggests an awards program among other things and urges PLVB to go after power lines, signage, parking, trees. Speakers bureau begun. Dinner: \$4.75/person. Memberships set to \$5/individual; \$10/family. Dinner was at the Yacht Club.

First sign comes down at 1000 block of Rosecrans; PLVB has 400 members; another sign down by January 1966.



1966 PLVB receives incorporation papers.

1967

First Community awards presented at Annual Dinner; price goes down to \$4.60.

1969

Undergrounding begins on Shelter Island Drive.

PLVB seeks sign control legislation; asks for zone change to eliminate or reduce the size and character of many of the existing signs.

1970

Two more billboards down; then the ultimate insult; a Jacaranda tree is uprooted by a sign truck!

1972

There are now 100 trees planted in the Village!

1973



First segment of Rosecrans underground-ing complete; removed 46 utility poles and 9025 linear feet of overhead lines.

1974

PLVB installs five wrought iron benches to replace advertising benches.

57 more utility poles removed; "Last Pole" ceremony held – total poles down is 103.

Dick Lareau presents first awards slide show. Dinner: \$5.50/person.

1976

PLVB Bulletin reports that THREE massage parlors close, including The Little Admiral.

1978

San Diego Evening Tribune columnist Neil Morgan speaks at dinner. Price: \$8.50.

1982

PLVB steps into the debate on allowing fishing on Kellogg Beach; lack of public restrooms, litter, and crowding at issue.

Ceremony marks completion of undergrounding project on Talbot.

1984

PLVB becomes Point Loma Village Association.

PLVA celebrates its 20th anniversary; dinner still \$12.50; membership drive increases membership to 1,350; Another billboard down – three to go.

1975

PLVB turns its attention to removing newsracks.

1980

Sewage treatment issue bubbles up. PLVB supports the City's application to continue only primary treatment.



One of Janet's Jacarandas

Janet Richards

I was working a band booth at the Point Loma Street Fair when Klonie walked up and introduced me to her companion, Janet Richards. "She's the one who chose the Jacaranda tree for the Village," said Klonie. Klonie later e-mailed me to share that "Janet is a remarkable 95 year old...came from Hawaii in the 20's...on scholarship to Mills College. Eventually met and married Sim Bruce Richards (probably San Diego's best Mid-Century Modern architect...studied with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin). I could go on and on...she is really extraordinary."

I set up an interview the following week.

"Janet, you plant the trees," is what Janet remembered when asked how she got involved with choosing and planting the first 60 Jacarandas along Rosecrans. She is a charter member of Point Loma Village Beautiful. The biggest part of Janet's task was dealing with the city. "They demanded dimensions of the hole and how it would be framed with concrete," said Janet. "It didn't make sense."

The easier part was choosing the trees. Janet chose Jacarandas because they "offer a splash of color suitable for our small community devoted to the ocean ... and – they're evergreen," said Janet. They were also one of 18 trees on the City's approved tree list.

Janet remembered that she and her boys would water the trees. "We tried a watering system where the store owners would water the trees. Some watered; some didn't. You can see the difference today! Janet suggested having a "Jacaranda Festival" to raise money for a massive fertilizer campaign.

Janet lives in Point Loma in a home designed by her husband Bruce.

Norm Magneson

Norm was involved with the PLA during the late 80s and 90s.

During that time, he also served on the Peninsula Community Planning Board. Norm was the chairman when the name changed from Point Loma Village Association to Point Loma Association. "The connotation was that we were just a little village and beautiful. It was a misnomer. Our focus was to preserve and enhance our quality of life – beautification was just one element."



Norm was PLA chair in 1989-1990.

"We needed political clout to increase membership," he said. Like Dick Lareau said, the "do-gooders" had to have a plan. He and Dick worked together on the Peninsula Community Plan to that end. "The plan created an overlay zone and developed a maritime/seafaring theme – no hodge-podge," said Norm. Norm also recalled the horrible traffic on Rosecrans. "There were 21 nuclear boats here – over 10,000 military." As a civil engineer, Norm took a leadership role in the sewage treatment plant issue during the late 1980s. "They wanted to expand into Cabrillo National Monument as part of the water reclamation plan," said Norm. "The PLA got involved and the City built the ocean outfall at the border. ... I was in front of the City Council every two weeks."

Norm made sure that the PLA was well represented. "Every City Council person had a PLA contact," said Norm. "The Beacon became our tabloid."

Norm also believed in strength in numbers. Under the leadership of King Boyd, Dick Lareau and Norm, the PLA increased its membership three-fold.

As for today's PLA, Norm said, "Lots of things have settled down now. The PLA is now focused on more beautification, civic, and charitable activities. What the PLA needs to do now is increase its membership. The PLA is such a great organization ... it doesn't have to be singularly focused on flowers."

At the conclusion of the interview, Norm smiled and said, "I liked a good fight. [The PLA] worked out well for me."

1985

Another billboard down! – 2 to go!

PLVA weighs in on satellite dishes.

Point Loma Sign installed on Harbor

PLVA turns its attention to Dana Jr. High site after vandals attack. The PLA tries to slow down the school board's bid process and is horrified to find that the school district is considering rezoning the property to allow for multi-family development. It's later found that the school district allowed the SWAT team to use the school for exercises! Residents seek a court order to stop the demolition of Dana.



1986

PLVA enters flap over Navy personnel parking on Rosecrans. Problem: Navy won't allow sailors to park unregistered or uninsured cars on base – and won't allow motorcycles at all. Norm Magneson said that there were regular 40 motorcycles lined up on Rosecrans.

1987

PLVA celebrates its 25th year; Record set for largest dinner turnout – 435.

1988

City approves a new Peninsula Community Plan. Dick Lareau, Norm Magneson and other PLVA members lend their influence.

1989

PLVA changes its name to Point Loma Association.

1990

The PLA newsletter reports that the Dana site will be open to the community for the auditorium, meeting rooms, and athletic facilities. The remainder will be used for administrative purposes.

1992

Phase I of the OB/Point Loma Entryway Tree Planting Project begins with 38 9-foot palms planted by Robb Field.

1993

After sitting in Hugh Story's yard for more than a year, six new street signs are installed. "To give you an idea of how complicated this is, CalTrans has to dig the holes, we (PLA members) and the city people have to drop the sign poles in them, we have to screw on the crossbars, and then the city people have to attach the blades," said Dick Lareau. "Getting all of that coordinated to happen at approximately the same time is a real headache, I can tell you."



1993 continued

PLA donates \$6000 to the OB Entryway Task Force for use at Ed's Triangle (Median 4).

30 palm trees planted at the perimeter of the triangle.

PLA opposes trucking of chlorine to the Waste Treatment Plant and construction of a sludge treatment facility by Cabrillo National Monument.

1994

PLA plants 30 more jacarandas on Rosecrans between Talbot and Nimitz; PLA installs new PLA sign on Nimitz.

1995

PLA plants 200 8-foot sycamore trees on both sides of the Cañon Street horseshoe turn from Akron to Ullman Streets.

PLA Annual Dinner returns to NTC Chapel – tickets \$25/person.

Dues go up to \$15/year; Membership reaches 3,000.

11/15/1995 – Dana Auditorium renamed Ann Tripp Jackson Auditorium.

1996

PLA spearheads beautification at Dewey Elementary School.

The Mean Green Team after a recent cleanup in front of Dewey Elementary



1997



Two huge Ficus trees planted at both sides of Nimitz and W. Point Loma

Inaugural PLA Golf Tournament at Sail Ho

Gold Medallions planted on Cañon between Rosecrans and Evergreen

1998

15 California fan palms planted by Dusty Rhodes Park.

1999

PLA wins Orchid Award for the Pork Chops!!



Mean Green Team



I met with the Mean Green Team after a Friday work party. The consensus was that the MGT began in 1996, and that their first project was the "pork chops" at West Point Loma and Nimitz.

Jodie Bruhn noted that the Mean Green Team is growing. Why? It's the vests! They changed from orange to green vests – and now have more name recognition. "We've established the Mean Green Team brand," said Stan Nadel. Before the green vests, they were mistaken for CalTrans workers – or worse yet, for prisoners on a chain gang!

Asked about their current projects, they agreed upon lots of tree plantings along Rosecrans, Cañon and Catalina – and the 15 maintenance projects.

Cecilia Carrick chimed in to say that the MGT is connecting with the rest of the community in projects like Hugh Story's Rose Garden, collaborative projects with the Rock Church and Westminster Presbyterian, and marching in the Festa Parade. "We've reached a turning point," said Ron Brooks. "People seem to be much more aware of the community."

Everyone had a similar experience with Hugh Story. When Hugh welcomed Alan Lord to Point Loma, Hugh said, "By the way, do you have a shovel? What are you doing Saturday? We're planting palm trees from 9 to noon." "We were there until 4:00," said Alan.

"He conscripted us all," said Ed Streicher. "He was quite a leader."

Asked about where the MGT is headed, the sentiment was, "more of the same." "We may take on different projects," said Ed. The problem with taking on more projects is that "we can never walk away from any project," said Ed. "We need constant vigilance."

Karen Davis

"When I retired from the Navy in 1994, Hugh walked across the street and had us working immediately," said Karen Davis. She remembered Hugh coordinating with Point Loma Nazarene University to plant palm trees around Median 4.

Asked about what has changed, "The only thing that's really changed is the number of projects, and that we've hired people to maintain our projects. In the beginning, it was rare to hire anyone to do anything. ... Now, the City is less able than ever before to help us out. We got so much support in the past. Drew Potacki helped us so many times. Those days are gone. History."

But the PLA has never had to purchase a tree. Hugh Story always managed to get them donated. Using Hugh's legacy, Karen was able to get the Torrey Pines donated for the Median 4 project.

Karen noted that many of the same people have been on MGT for a long time. "The only way to get out of the Mean Green Team is by dying or being too feeble to work," she joked.

On Hugh Story: "Hugh was always able to do a lot with a little. He got people to donate materials." When Hugh died, Karen acknowledged that Hugh's skill set was "Dormant for a while. ... It was a tremendous loss. I wish he had written things down. There were a lot of gaps. We had to re-learn." But then she noted that Celeste Trepte took up the cause for the Nimitz on and off-ramps, what she calls "Celestial Gardens."

Now, the PLA taps into a lot of community resources. "We try to collaborate with any organization willing to work with us, such as The Rock Church and Point Loma Presbyterian."

When asked about PLA's future plans, Karen didn't hesitate: "To finish Phase 2 of Median 4, and look at past projects and enhance what we've worked on."



Karen (center) is at the top of the heap with her Mean Green buddies.



2000

Annual Dinner topic: NTC development. \$38; PLA institutes higher levels of membership (Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze).

2002

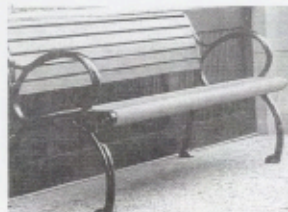
PLA becomes the presenting sponsor for the Point Loma Summer Concerts.

2003

PLA installs four new bus benches and two new trash cans – thanks to a \$6000 grant from the County of San Diego. Goal is to replace all 26.

2005

The Utility Box Project Begins.



PLA launches web site.



PLA joins Newsrack Ordinance Task Force.

2006

Hugh Story, Point Loma's Johnny Appleseed, dies. The Hugh Story Memorial Committee begins its long search for a suitable memorial and site.

Dick Lareau's slide show is no more! It's a video! Councilman Kevin Faulconer, District Attorney Michael Aguirre, Supervisor Greg Cox and Mayor Jerry Sanders weigh in on the change. Dwight Harrington, producer.



2007

People for Trees gives the Soto Street its tool shed and tools to PLA.



First full-color newsletter!

"Graffiti Gang" formed.

Councilman Kevin Faulconer takes a crowbar to the first noncompliant newsrack in front of the Post Office.



2008

After Celeste Trepte persists for months and finds a water source, planting begins at the Nimitz on ramp to Famosa Blvd. Later, a drought tolerant garden is planted, and is aptly named "Celestial Gardens."



King Boyd

King chaired the PLA for a total of five years. He first served from 1981 – 1985, then again in 1986 after Ann Jackson died during her term. Asked about what he remembered during his tenure, King said, "We became aware of TV dishes (satellite dishes)." People thought they would destroy views. We also got an ordinance passed to prevent inflatable ads."

But King also started the move to increase membership. According to Norm Magnuson, King welcomed every new resident and every new business with a handshake and a PLVA membership application. King was humble about his role. "I spent a lot of time taking signs off signposts," he joked. He remembered taking down a sign for a lost iguana.

"The PLA has done some great things since I left. It was a lot of fun. I worked with a lot of nice people."

King is living in Rancho San Diego with his wife Sheppie. "You can't live at the end of Point Loma if you can't drive," he joked. I left King with a newsletter – and he asked for a membership application.

Dick Lareau



When I met Dick for the interview, he had a stack of six or seven planning documents on his desk. "We started with beautification," said Dick. "We thought we could change this in a hurry. That was over fifty years ago. We had to beg and steal to move one inch."

And the PLA had to become political. "We had gone from a group of do-gooders without a plan to realizing that to make progress, we had to involve everyone – the Navy, School District, Port, elected officials. ... We made progress inch by inch." Talking about the Navy park-

2009



Mean Greeners gather at the new newsrack corral in front of the Post Office.

PLA starts e-blasting.

2010



Hugh Story Memorial Unveiled

Annual Dinner tickets \$75

New La Playa Trails monument is dedicated at the corner of Shelter Island Drive and Rosecrans. A time capsule containing the Spring

PLA newsletter is placed into the monument.

PLA Mean Green Team and Summer Concerts Committee march in the 100th Annual Festa Parade.



Continued on the following page

Groundbreaking at Median 4. 99 Tequila Agaves plants and nine Torrey Pine trees planted.



Supervisor Cox declares May 12, 2011 "PLA Day" to celebrate PLA's 50 years.

- More than 700 trees planted
- Over 30 utility boxes painted
- Only two billboards left to go
- Undergrounding projects all over the place
- 15 regular projects of the Mean Green Team
- Community Collaboration

A promise of so much more!

ing issue on Rosecrans, Dick said, "We invited them to our dinner and eventually solved the problem."

The PLA did the same with the Point Loma Nazarene University. "There were some people on the board against the University," he said. So – they invited PLNU representatives to the dinner.

The planning documents? The first Community Plan was dated 1968. Dick served on the "Implementation Committee," which reviewed new projects. That committee soon became the Peninsula Community Planning Board. "There was no competition [between PLVB and the PCPB]," said Dick. "Everybody was pulling in the same direction." Then, it became time to update the Roseville Community Plan. "We thought it would be simple," said Dick. But local business owners didn't want to be told what to do. "It got so bad that San Diego Federal wouldn't allow us to meet there any more." Then Dick had an idea: put some of the business owners on the committee! Great plan, but it didn't work. He still couldn't get the plan approved. "I finally said to hell with it. We're just going to print it and do it." That was in 1973.

Then, in 1975, Dick worked on the California Coastal Plan. "We sneaked some of the Roseville Plan into that document," he said. Then, in 1979, it was time for the second Community Plan. "We still snuck some stuff in," said Dick. He did the same for the Local Coastal Program and Land Use Plan in 1981.

Years followed with more of the same. In 1987, Dick helped with the new Peninsula Community Plan Overlay Zone. "It was successful for a while," said Dick. "It makes you cry to see what has NOT happened." He explained that City Planners were gung ho to implement the plan in the beginning. Then – staff changes and time changed the level of enthusiasm to follow the plan.

As everyone knows, Dick is behind the famous slide show, which began in 1973. But it wasn't just a slide show – it was a carrot: a way to reward businesses and community for a job well done – and to lend credibility to PLVB.

It was our turn to laugh.

Dick shared that he was having lunch with Hugh Story when they saw two guys with a drill machine. At that time, six new street signs had been sitting in Hugh's back yard for a year while they waited for the city to drill the holes. "We stopped the guys and got them to drill one or two holes. Then we took them to lunch – and they drilled the other four."

PLA at its best.

Patti Adams



Patti Adams was chair of the PLA from 2005 to 2007. She took the role of chairperson to the next level. She believed in collaboration. "I learned a lot about collaboration from Lee Lipsey," said Patti. And she learned from Hugh Story. "He introduced me to the military leaders. They are such an important interface."

I wanted to interview Patti because I felt she would have a good idea of where PLA should be heading. "The organization is more interested in big projects and political issues," said Patti. "I'd like to see a melding of that and beautification." Patti would also like to have one or two PLA members on the Peninsula Community Planning Board – much like it was in the 1980s under Dick Lareau's reign.

What do we need? "We need a BID – but making [the Village] cute isn't enough." Patti is worried about the Port taking tourist and business money away from Point Loma – and NTC taking away shopping areas. "We need more partnerships; more membership. ... It's not like we're just for residents any more." Patti would love to see a Jr. Point Loma Association at Point Loma High School. "They need to be aware of our organization," she said. "They are the next generation."