

proofs

newsletter, issue 4

March 1, 2008



The Studio for Southern California History seeks to critically chronicle local history from a social perspective to foster a sense of place and engagement.

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The Studio is located at
525 Alpine Street #103
Los Angeles, CA 90012
in the heart of Chinatown.

Visit us online at www.socalstudio.org.



Playing Place A Hit with the Youth!

Sherman Oaks
Students
Add to the
Historical Record



On December 7, 2007 Sherman Oaks super teacher Kim Carlsberg from the Help Group brought her students to the Studio. After taking the bus in from the Valley to Chinatown for a "delicious" lunch, students came to the Studio to explore its different exhibits. This bright group of students played LA Pinball, made new golf records on the Long Beach Grand Putt, and added entries to the timeline for the current exhibit *Playing Place: Southern California Sports*. A great time was had by all. The Studio wishes to thank Kim Carlsberg and her staff in coordinating the visit. If you are interested in bringing your class to the Studio, call us at 213-229-8890.

STUDIO NOTES

New Members!

We are grateful to the following individuals for joining the Studio:

*Lois Banner
Peggy Bernal
Joanne and Michael Cate
Mark Gallegos
Allan Gluck
Meg Gomez
Marlene Grossman
Kristin Hargrove
Shirley Kurata
T. Julie Mairs
Isa-Kae Meksin
Kevin Miller
Linda Rees
Ed Schoenberg
Kalvin, Jennifer,
Morgan & Malina Sekhon
Terri Snyder
Linda Vallejo*

Interested in becoming a member?
Call or visit us online.

We are proud and thankful to announce that the **Edward W. Hazen Foundation** awarded the Studio a \$1,000 grant on February 9, 2008. The Edward W. Hazen Foundation is a private foundation established in 1925, which seeks to assist young people, particularly minorities and those disadvantaged by poverty, to achieve their full potential as individuals and as active participants in a democratic society.

The Studio will launch the **California Hospital School for Nursing Digital Archive** in early April 2008. Working closely with alumni from the California Hospital School for Nursing, the Studio has created a dynamic online archive of the School's history. To explore the archive, visit the Studio's website at www.socalstudio.org and select the link for the archive.

STUDIO PROFILES IN COURAGE: LEONARD BLUETT

By Stephanie Christian

In each issue of **proofs** we will profile one of the many participants in our oral history program. Participants tell their life histories, which are videotaped and included in the Studio's programming and expanding multi-media database. To date, over forty interviews have been collected representing a broad spectrum of ages, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, exploring topics such as family, work history and events in Los Angeles history. We are currently in the process of digitizing and indexing the collection, making it available for the public to access through the **LA History Archive**.

This volume's oral history profile is **Leonard Bluett**, who began going by the name of "Lenny" at age 14 or 15 when he started playing piano in local jazz clubs. Lenny was born in his grandmother's house in Los Angeles' Jefferson Park in 1919 – a house built by his grandfather which he still passes each Sunday on his way to church. Lenny remembers the front of the house as a child, filled with roses and dahlias thanks to the "green thumb" of his grandfather, who was brought out to California to be a gardener for Henry Huntington's family. Lenny became aware of his musical and dancing abilities at the age of 14, when he joined a musical quartet called "The Four Dreamers" who were coached by local disc jockey Al Jarvis and whose pianist was a friend of Lenny's from Chicago named Nat King Cole.

Lenny shared some interesting memories of race relations and what it was like to be an African American man in Los Angeles during his life. He remembers being pulled over and harassed by police in the late 1930's for having a friend, who happened to be a white woman, in the car with him. In the same breath he acknowledged that, in his view, not all of the police at that time were like that but some were. He also shared an inspiring story of an early struggle for racial equality that occurred while he was working as an extra on the set of the film **Gone With the Wind**. Lenny and other African American actors noticed that the portable restrooms on the set had been labeled to separate between African American restrooms and White restrooms. (ARTICLE CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



*1st Annual
Fundraiser
a Success:*

**"Be Our VIP" Wins
Hearts & Dollars!**

By Stephanie Christian

The Studio's first annual "Be Our VIP" fundraiser, held on Saturday February 9th to coincide with the celebration of Chinese New Year, was a resounding success thanks to all of your support! Over \$2000 was raised to help fund our many wonderful programs including the development and implementation of the [LA History Archive](#); part multi-media database and part community log that will provide educator resources such as standards based lesson plans which utilize primary sources from the Archive's database.

Among the highlights of the evening's entertainment were D.J. Wanda's rockabilly spinnings, Max Benavidez's reading of his children's book entitled [Teo in Palo Verde](#) and the musical and vocal stylings of jazz pianist and actor Lenny Bluett whose recent 89th birthday was celebrated with a cake and candles.

The Studio would like to extend a special thank you to [D.J. Wanda](#), [Max Benavidez](#), [Lenny Bluett](#), the [Los Angeles Pizza Company](#), [Hop Li Restaurant](#), [Fields Pianos](#), the [Los Angeles Dodgers](#), the [Los Angeles Kings](#), the [Staples Center](#) and [Regal Cinemas](#) for their generous donations of everything from food and entertainment to a digital piano and event tickets for our raffle. Visit our website at www.socialstudio.org or call us at 213.229.8890 to support the Studio through the purchase of a membership, t-shirt, [People's Guide to LA](#), set of [LA History Playing Cards](#) or by volunteering at the Studio.



Sandra Uribe (above) and other VIPs (below) celebrate the night.



LEONARD BLUETT PROFILE (FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)
At Lenny's urging, the situation was brought to the attention of one of the film's stars, Clark Gable, who insisted that the signs be removed, which they promptly were. Lenny spent a large part of his later career traveling and performing in venues all over the world, including Marrakesh and Fes in Morocco and Madrid, Spain. He sings in and speaks multiple languages including English, French and Spanish. Although he is sorry that his career is winding down somewhat at age 89, he still performs occasionally at a private club in Los Angeles owned by Rupert Murdoch and "holds office" each day with his friends at a donut shop in Los Angeles.

I am not a native Californian, in fact I was born in Nova Scotia, Canada and grew up in rural Maine, which is about as far away from here as one can get and still be on the same continent. I now live right here in Culver City, though I've only been here for about two years so my understanding of real local history is fairly limited. I moved here out of circumstantial convenience and really had no idea even what the people on my street were even like.



Photo 1 of 5 by Josh Gill.

Los Angeles is not like any other city, it sprawls so far in every direction that other cities and municipalities are literally engulfed and there are no clear physical borders that define the various areas. Culver City is one of these areas that is its own separate entity. I live just on what appears to be a fairly debatable border, meaning nobody can quite tell what city my street is in, mail, police, public works, and taxis all have different opinions. That was the first thing I discovered about my immediate neighborhood and it has proved to be a bit of a nuisance.

My neighborhood is sort of strange. I live on a dead-end street in an area that no surrounding towns want to claim responsibility for, and unfortunately it's not hard to see why. It is interesting however that on my short street there is a very diverse populace; the ethnic spectrum is fairly broad. At the same time nobody seems to communicate with each other, it's the most frustratingly unfriendly grouping of people. One of my immediate neighbors actually stated that they don't really have time nor do they like to meet new people, literally, and they never have friends over. Two streets over is gangland, with the Culver City Locos or whatever, we share a tiny park at the end of our streets. Sometimes there is unpleasantness. Word of mouth is . . . This area was all serious gang territory back in the 60's and most families left. Many of the properties were bought at low prices by younger people willing to put up with a sketchier neighborhood. Eventually it was brought back to a more family filled residential street. One would think that with such a past everyone would be friendlier here, but in general, it must have had the opposite effect. It has been said that Los Angeles was never meant to be a place to settle, not that I agree with that statement, but it sort of sums up how I feel about my current neighborhood. This is only my neighborhood because I happen to live here at the moment, but I have no allegiance to it, and I do plan on leaving. Maybe that's how all my neighbors feel as well.

The publicized history of Culver City is all about films and the old studios, which is a major part of the city's history. The city was perfectly placed right on a waterway, which is now a concrete rain gutter, and the railroad, which no longer exists even though the entire county is lacking in all forms of public transit. Because of the manufacturing convenience these aspects presented, Culver City was also basically an industrial wasteland of factories and oil drilling. The dereks can still be seen everywhere throughout the area, some still lurk, hidden in the protected salt marsh of Ballona Creek.

My Neighborhood PHOTO/ESSAY

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The MY NEIGHBORHOOD photo/essay challenge is ongoing. Entries are due on the 1st of each month and are judged quarterly. Respondents are asked to submit five or more photographs and a 500 word essay that explains how these photos illustrate how your neighborhood is home to you. Quarterly winners receive an iPod nano!

The Forgotten Girls: the Ventura School for Girls, 1913-1962 by Sandra Uribe

Beginning in 2008, the Studio is conducting research on the Ventura School for Girls, a correctional facility for girls served much of the state's population between 1913 - 1962.

Its impact on generations of women cannot be underestimated.



The former School as it is now, a private rehabilitation facility.

The Ventura School for Girls was established in 1913 and became a physical reality in 1914. It was constructed on 125 acres of land, formerly part of the San Buenaventura Mission, as a juvenile detention facility for girls. Its initial 26 wards were transferred from Whittier State Reformatory. Governor Hiram Johnson appointed five representative women of the State to the school's trustees. On January 16, 1914 the Ventura Free Press hailed Ventura as the first America institution managed wholly by women. To date, the School's legacy and impact has been merely documented as a footnote in history. The Ventura School for Girls History Project (VSGHP) is a long-term research project to recover the hidden history of this important California institution. Research by the Studio has unearthed about 180 newspaper articles and is conducting oral interviews with former students and academic. The Studio will be working with scholars including Miraslava Chavez, Elizabeth Escobedo and Eddie Salas. Researchers Nancy Bautista, Josh Gill, Maria Heman and Sandra Uribe (the latter two featured below) have gathered sources. The VSGHP will tell the stories of hundreds of California girls and women who worked at the School and those who were sent to Ventura between 1913 and 1962. The Ventura School for Girls housed the state's 'troubled' female population whose breadth included delinquents, "defectives," "morons," mentally



ill, criminals, as well as those considered promiscuous. In addition to exploring education and medical discourse around disability, mental illness, and abuse over time in California, the VSGHP will explicitly document the process of remembering this place in a community that currently knows little to nothing about it. Unlike its male counterpart the Whittier State School, which is California Historic Landmark #947, the Ventura School for Girls remains a mystery to many current residents of Ventura and to us all. The School must have made an impact on those who spent time there.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please contact the Studio.

2008 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All events are **FREE** but reservations are recommended to ensure space. Call 213-229-8890.

May 3: Saturday Walking Tour, May 3 - LA Pet Memorial Park in Calabasas, 10 am - 12 pm
Location: 5068 N. Old Scandia Lane, Calabasas, CA 91372, twenty miles northwest of Hollywood in Calabasas. Led by Joe Walker & Steve Goldstein this tour explores this cosy memorial park to some of the region's pets.

May 10: Saturday Gallery Exhibit - **Animals Around Us** opens
Location: Studio for Southern California History. See website for forthcoming details

September 6: Saturday Gallery Exhibit - **Signs of Our Times** opens. Location: Studio for Southern California History.



September 7: Sunday Walking Tour - Calvary & Home of Peace Cemeteries, 10 am - 12 pm
Location: 4201 Whittier Blvd, LA. Led by Resident Storytellers, Steve Goldstein & Joe Walker, this tour explores two faith based cemeteries where many LA residents, famous & not, reside including Jose Diaz, the true victim in the Zoot Suit murder case of 1942, his probable killer (who died in 1971 after holding up a bank), infamous L.A. mobster Jack Dragna, lots of stars, and, (almost for sure), the technical advisor on "American Me" who was murdered in 1993 by the Mexican Mafia.

October 4: Saturday Walking Tour - Westwood Village Memorial Park, 10 am - 12 pm
Location: 1218 Glendon Ave, Los Angeles CA 90024 (Entrance). This cemetery is over 100 years old, but until 1962, no "famous" burials had taken place yet, then Marilyn Monroe came. The very small cemetery is just off Wilshire Blvd & Glendon Ave, behind high-rise office buildings & a movie theatre.

November 1: Saturday Walking Tour - Hollywood Forever, 10 am - 12 pm. Location: 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038 Meeting Place: at the front gates. Hollywood Forever (formerly Hollywood Memorial Park) holds more history per square foot than an archeological dig in Babylon. You actually feel its 100 years of existence as you roam the grounds & ancient mausoleums & watch the geese & cranes in the lake. Led by Resident Storytellers, Steve Goldstein & Joe Walker, this tour looks at *the* Hollywood resting place.

The Studio is located at
525 Alpine Street #103, LA, CA 90012

Don't Miss April 5th's "Playing Place: Story Symposium for Southern California Sports:" a forum that invites your voice.

Time: 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Place: Chinatown Public Library, 639 N. Hill Street, Los Angeles 90012

Parking: Lot available at the library or at Unified Parking for \$3.50 on Hill, just south of Alpine.

Free but reservations are recommended to ensure space. Call 213-229-8890.

Join this public conversation on sports across local history, sponsored by the Studio for Southern California History in conjunction with its current exhibit, **Playing Place: Southern California Sports** which traces the countless individuals who have shaped and continue to make local history through sports. In addition to looking at many sports, this program explores the role of sports in public expression, particularly for groups denied a voice in mainstream society throughout history. Moderated by Dr. La'Tonya Rease Miles, this diverse panel will explore how sports and the issues surrounding them have generated community and modes of expression throughout Southern California history. Included among the panelists are Jose Alamillo; Carole Oglesby; Joan Johnson; Sandra Uribe; and Michael Willard. While the panelists include many interesting voices, this event invites the audience to participate in the discussion and is appropriate to all ages. There will be a light reception following the conversation.