

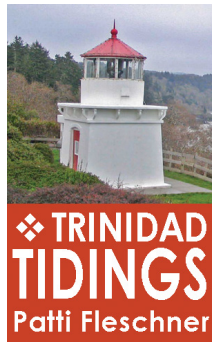
# OPINION

## Native Plant Garden inspires, Trinidad Chamber surges, art night looms

Julie Weeder, a recent Trinidad Museum Native Plant Garden volunteer, invites amateur or expert native plant enthusiasts to join the dedicated group of plant enthusiasts who meet regularly to maintain the gardens enjoyed by so many around the museum, library and land trust grounds.

Julie writes: "The Trinidad Museum Native Plant Garden was established in 2006 to introduce people to the common native plants in the Trinidad area, especially those growing on Trinidad Head and in the state parks, and to inspire people to garden with local native plants."

Julie continues: "Volunteers designed and established the garden and continue to maintain several plant communities, including a vernal pond used by native frogs and salamanders and a meadow with many grass species and a Bee Hotel that supports critical life stages of native insect species. Open every day, the garden is a beautiful and serene destination frequented by locals and visitors. It also provides a rich learning experience for gardeners and anyone who appreciates nature where fully grown, labeled spec-



❖ TRINIDAD TIDINGS  
Patti Fleschner

imens of plants native to Trinidad can be observed. There is much to do at the garden and more volunteer help is sorely needed. No experience is necessary. Volunteers learn as they go. Veteran volunteers can advise new arrivals about what garden tasks are most needed through the seasons.

Consider learning from master gardeners for free while enhancing the beauty of the mature plants! Volunteering helps to build confidence in identifying native plants and invasive weeds at various points in their life cycles while learning how to care for plants in a garden setting."

Gardeners gather on Sundays from about 10 a.m. to noon, weather permitting. Email garden co-chairmen Ingrid Bailey and Mary Kline at [ingridhaven@gmail.com](mailto:ingridhaven@gmail.com) or [humboldtmary@gmail.com](mailto:humboldtmary@gmail.com).

**Trinidad Chamber of Commerce lives!** Greater Trinidad Chamber of Commerce board member John Lee has led a campaign recently to revive the Chamber, a Trinidad institution since 1956 but which has suffered from coronavirus shut-downs and a dwindling pool of volunteers. Suc-

cess! John's efforts have proved that there are many community service enthusiasts out there who have been forced to hibernate for the past couple of years.

The Chamber lives, and no doubt the group of veteran and new Chamber leaders: Brett Shuler, Toni Magyar, Cammie Anderson, Michael Ruiz, John Adams, Alia, Eli Naffah, John McClury, Bonnie MacEvoy, Sherry Vanderpool, and Mel Getman, together with John Lee, will renew and refresh Chamber events and continue the mission of the Chamber, which is to enhance the economic, social and civic life of Trinidad.

For information on learning more about meetings and events, email [johnlee@apluselectronics.com](mailto:johnlee@apluselectronics.com).

**Trinidad Art Night Starting April 30** Joli Einem has announced that the first Trinidad Art Night of the season will be on Saturday, April 30 from 6 to 9 p.m. at venues all over Trinidad. The Trinidad Civic Club will have an information station in the Club Room, Town Hall, throughout the evening.

Venues confirmed for April 30 are Lighthouse Grill and Headie's Pizza & Pour outdoor entertainment featuring Jim Lahman's band playing blues, soul and fund

and Jenni and David and The Sweet Soul Band in Town Hall at 8 p.m. (this venue has a suggested admission of \$5 to \$20 sliding scale at the door; most of the venues exhibit art or host music free of charge). Trinidad Museum will be open 6 to 9 p.m.

Email Joli at [jeinem@sonic.net](mailto:jeinem@sonic.net) for the latest updates on venue and exhibit information.

**City of Trinidad meetings** Pay attention. Be involved. Opportunities abound. The Trinidad Trails Committee will meet on Tuesday, April 19 at 5 p.m. and the Trinidad Planning Commission on April 20 at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

Email or stop by Town Hall to ask City Clerk Gabriel Adams ([cityclerk@trinidad.ca.gov](mailto:cityclerk@trinidad.ca.gov)), assisted by Anton Sousa and Jennifer Hakenen, to be added to the City email notification list about meetings and agendas.

**Rest in Peace, Connie Butler and Joan Baker**

Two beloved and outstanding ladies, Connie Butler and Joan Baker, died in late March. The Trinidad community extends its sympathies to the bereaved families and friends of these exemplary women.

Email Patti at [baycity@sonic.net](mailto:baycity@sonic.net).

## A Linda Vista rebel's huff turns into hard-won admiration

Not everybody had a great childhood. I know I did, or thought I did. There's not much difference between the two. My family was neither rich nor poor, but we had enough. We had sufficient clothing. We frequently ate fried potatoes and beans for dinner and we never complained. We lived in a house, rented, yes, but a whole house, small but adequate. We attended school during the week nine months of the year whether we liked it or didn't, and couldn't wait for the summer to finally land. Every chance we got, we went outside and played with a brother or a kid or kids on the block. We never kept track of time. We just lived. It was a Small World within a Big World, but being small and knowable seemed to us the best part about it.

The fragile eggshell of childhood cracks open eventually, of course, exposing the vulnerable soul within to more sober concerns, whether of family or community, or both. If you're lucky, the period of adolescence that follows turns out to be wonderful, and if unlucky, not so wonderful. Mine was the second.

However, that's not the story I want to tell here, but a related one, about what was going on behind the scenes, so to speak, within one's world and one's soul. At the time of living through it, a person doesn't know about these things, and only learns later the true, often subtle, origins of the attitudes one adopts that end up affecting one's important life decisions.

My childhood took place in Linda Vista, "A Neighborhood of San Diego," say the blue and white signs today as if to define the working-class community as some quaint little corner of the big, fine city. At the time of my childhood, the 1950s, Linda Vista was just a Navy Housing Project situated on a bluff above Mission Valley, a few miles north of Downtown. It consisted of detached single-family homes, duplexes and fourplexes laid out more or less in a grid but also following the natural contours of the land above the canyons. The buildings were built solid, as you would expect from Standard Navy Issue, with no-nonsense layouts, with walls of stucco, with single-glazed metal casement windows to let in the plentiful light, the glass putied in thickly (I have memories of helping my dad repair one of our windows, my job to massage the putty with the palms of my hands into 4-inch long worm-like shapes before handing him the lumpy,

stringy blobs) fitted with gabled roofs, concrete stoops, spacious lawns around every building, house or apartment, and alleys to separate the back yards of the houses on opposite sides of the block.

What gave Linda Vista its unique identity, unlike the ranch house urban sprawl that was taking place throughout the city during the 1950s and had been since the end of WW2, was its Plaza situated in the center of the community. It contained a hardware store, drug store, liquor store, two grocery stores, a movie theatre, a department store, a shoe store, a bakery and some other stores I don't remember, with a central lawn shaded by a few sycamore trees. Linda Vista also had a Junior High and its own High School, the usual synagogues and churches, one of them with a parochial school affixed. In other words, Linda Vista was a complete community. You didn't have to leave it for a downtown shopping trip (unless you wanted to for a treat) or to drive to one of the shopping malls that

were sprouting up adjacent to the many brand new subdivisions about the city.

But Linda Vista was an anomaly, an artificial community compared to Hillcrest or Bankers Hill which grew up slowly and organically around the turn of the century. Linda Vista was created deliberately in the late 1930s to house the incoming mass of migrating folks flooding into Southern California, folks who were needed to work in the aircraft and munition factories to supply the troops in the wars that had begun in Europe and in the Pacific. At the time, the San Diego fathers and real estate promoters were only interested in welcoming the more well-off transplants from the Midwest or East Coast (mine came in from Oklahoma,) those who would with minimum transition embrace the leisurely life in climate-perfect San Diego. Nobody of the city fathers group was interested in promoting houses for the working-class. The U.S. military, after begging the city to change its housing policy towards non-affluent in-migrants, in order to bring in the much needed workers for the factories, got fed up with waiting and decided to do it themselves. Thus was born Linda Vista, a "neighborhood of San Diego" yes, but a working-class one whether the wealthier San Diegans wanted the type or didn't.

After my dad left the family

in mid-stride when I turned 13, the rest of us moved from Linda Vista to East San Diego to share a larger house with my grandparents for childcare (that didn't work out; grandparents typically can't handle teenagers and mine couldn't either.) The ranch house subdivision we moved into lacked the Monopoly Game variation of house types I was used to (the hotels representing the fourplexes where some of my friends lived.) I was not happy. I had lost my home base and couldn't relate to this new development of look-alike houses with humongous garage doors and few kids playing outdoors. There was no Plaza or a Boy's Club to center the community, only a couple of strip malls and one Richfield gas station on the corner of Euclid and 54th Street where my new step-dad worked (he eventually bought it.) A teen already feels like a stranger in his body. I felt like a stranger in my house, my street, my whole neighborhood.

I don't know if it was a stigma to be from Linda Vista, but I suspected it was, especially compared to communities like Point Loma or La Jolla. In my case, the outsider feeling may have been influenced by having attended a parochial school while my buddies went to public school. As the years went by, the maverick character stuck, and during high school, when I began to look around the city of my origin with a typical teenager's resentment, I didn't much like what I was seeing. What's the point of such a bland lifestyle? I asked myself. What is everybody in this town trying to do? Does a San Diego citizen's daily life consist of no more than being a consumer, of going to the beach on weekends and sitting under an umbrella, of securing a well-paying and boring job at some insurance company for one's entire adult life?

In a fit of youthful rebellion, at age 18 I decided I wanted no part of that lifestyle and I left my hometown. For reasons I didn't understand then, except in a vague sort of way, the city I grew up in didn't love its Past, or even have one that mattered to it, evidently. It was all about the New and the Now. And without a past that roots one's self-definition, there's nothing left but a shallow identity, a shallow way of life, and a future with nothing to look forward to but more of the same. I was even ashamed, frankly, of being from San Diego, and for years I didn't like admitting I was born and raised there.

And then, 30 years later, in the late 1990s, the city of San Diego

changed. It realized its mistaken postwar preference for growth at any cost, and it resolved to put things right. How did I find out? On a random search of the web for urban design. Consider the following from the General Plan of the City of San Diego, a direct quote from the page one of the "Urban Design Element."

"Many of San Diego's older neighborhoods built prior to



WW2 capitalized on the City's natural features and temperate climate. The open porches on early 20th century craftsman style homes and the bungalow courts focused on common open space. Much of the postwar development did not respond to San Diego's climate or natural conditions. Porches were eliminated and pedestrian connections deemphasized. A major challenge for the City is to return to the traditional pedestrian-oriented (pre-WW2) forms of development... There is a need to address urban form and design through policies aimed at respecting our natural environment, preserving open space systems, and targeting new growth into compact villages."

With the concept of a "City of Villages" instead of a "City of Tract House Subdivisions," San Diego has shifted its focus to a better growth pattern. (My recent visits to the city, where much of my family still lives, confirm this new focus.) It intends to protect its natural forms because that is what makes the city uniquely beautiful and habitable. It intensifies its appreciation of its distinct neighborhoods (including Linda Vista) by emphasizing their walkability and pedestrian-friendly architecture, whether commercial or residential. The Urban Design Element was completed, in house,

in 2002. In 2008 it was adopted into the General Plan. In short the City of San Diego has discovered/realized what it best about it (for humans, not automobiles) and it intends to keep it that way as much as possible by following a thorough program, installed into the code, to ensure that new construction follows the best design principles for urban life. Here are a few samples from San Diego's Urban Element program:

"Link villages, public attractions, canyons and open space and other destinations together by connecting them with trail systems, bikeways, landscaped boulevards, formalized parks, and/or natural open space as appropriate."

"Use building and landscape materials that blend with and do not create visual or other conflicts with the natural environment in instances where new buildings abut natural areas."

"Provide architectural features that establish and define a building's appeal and enhance the neighborhood's character."

"Encourage the use of materials and finishes that reinforce a sense of quality and permanence."

"Acknowledge the positive aspects of nearby existing buildings by incorporating compatible features in new development."

Or, as I have heard it said, "Blend the Past with the Present."

Arcata, like San Diego, is blessed with natural advantages. Fortunately, it was spared the pressure of overwhelming urban sprawl like many other towns in California due to its remote location. Unlike San Diego, however, which is California's second largest city and therefore full of talented professionals of every type, Arcata's fund of urban designers, architects and builders is limited by comparison, and public input is needed and can go a long way to help city planners define and then enforce the best standards for future development.

The coming Gateway Area Plan is only the beginning. San Diego has laid out a thorough program which has many features that could help Arcata or any other city achieve its goals.

Well, and as for that 18-year-old who left San Diego in a huff, all I can say is that the boy grew up, as did San Diego, and now, when he goes back to visit his family, he feels proud of what his hometown has become and he likes it again.

So it's all good.

*Daniel Duncan's San Diego story has been fictionalized in his novel, Mi Hijo Mi Hermano.*



❖ THE FUTURE OF ARCATA  
Daniel Duncan