



It's all about networking!

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**L.A. Historic Cultural Monument
#484**

The Oakridge Estate

There are very few historic landmarks left in Los Angeles where you can stand on the grounds and feel like you are living in another era. One of these is the historic Oakridge Estate.

Built for actress Barbara Stanwyck in 1936 by noted architect Paul R. Williams, and sold to character actor, Jack Oakie and his wife Victoria Horne around 1940, this English Tudor-style house is the quintessential example of the country/ranch lifestyle the Valley once had to offer, and the only one of its kind still with us.

Originally, the house was built in an epoch era in the growth of Northridge at a time when people, including many movie stars, moved out to this area to enjoy the wide-open spaces that the country way of life had to offer. Barbara Stanwyck and Zeppo Marx had two homes built on Devonshire Street near Reseda Boulevard on the hill with a ranch below. Devonshire was unpaved and Reseda Boulevard ended at Devonshire. They combined their names and called their one hundred acre ranch Marwyck.

Northridge was once known as the horse capital of the world, and Marwyck was a thoroughbred horse breeding ranch. Some of the most famous thoroughbreds were born and bred on the hundred acres that made up the backyard. The house sat on top of a hill, separated from the horse pastures at the bottom of the slope only by a white corral fence.

After it was sold, the name "Oakridge" came from a combination of Jack Oakie and the town where it is located, Northridge. The 6,500 square foot, two-story house has four fireplaces, a swimming pool, tennis court and count-

less interesting historic design features and currently sits on 9.47 acres.

Today, standing by the pool area looking down the hill, you can still feel the horses roaming in the alfalfa fields.

Jack Oakie passed away in 1978. In 2000, his widow, Victoria, donated the estate to USC's School of Cinematic Arts. Victoria Oakie passed away in 2003 at the age of 91. USC held the property for several years, then eventually sold it to a real estate developer. Although the home and immediate grounds were a protected historic landmark, the developer planned to build 28 single-family homes on the adjacent vacant land.

As soon as the transaction fell out of escrow, Councilman Greig Smith saw the opportunity to acquire the entire property for the City of Los Angeles and began securing Quimby funds to protect the historic home. In 2008, the Department of Recreation and Parks Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of the 1.8-acre house and grounds in order to preserve it. In September 2009, the Board approved the purchase of the total 9.47 acres.

Recently, a Park Advisory Board was appointed and will make recommenda-



One of the paintings in the famous Mural Room

tions to the Department of Recreation and Parks for future uses of the property. A non-profit fundraising entity has also been assembled and will offer community members the chance to be part of the Oakridge Estate.

The City of Los Angeles remains committed to preserving the property as a community asset that will be accessible to the public. Two absolutely fantastic historical tours were coordinated by Richard Hilton, Northridge 100, and produced by Councilman Greig Smith's office. No tours are scheduled at this time. For more information, please call Council District 12 at (818) 756-8501. To be put on the mailing list and be notified of upcoming meetings and tours, please e-mail the Oakridge Park Advisory Board at OakridgePAB@gmail.com. The Oakridge website will be coming soon - www.oakridgeestate.org. ***



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LOVE STORIES

Truly loving another means letting go of all expectations. It means full acceptance, even celebration of another's personhood. --Karen Casey



Severin and Melinda Browne

I had just about come to terms with the possibility that I might spend the rest of my life solo when this adorable man walked in with a tweed jacket and hat.

I was in my late 40's; it was 1999, and I had been single for many years. I felt as though I was entirely ready for a relationship, but nothing was revealing itself to me in that area. I had just about come to terms with the possibility that I might spend the rest of my life solo when I attended an amateur singers' workshop with my girlfriend. While sitting there waiting for the show to start, this adorable man walked in with a tweed jacket and hat, and without hesitation I said to my girlfriend, "I want to spend the rest of my life with that man." I remember after I said it I wondered why I had said it -- it was as if I had spoken without even thinking. I watched the tweed-clad man as he made his way to a seat near the front of the stage and I kept my eye on him as the show started.

A wonderful singer took the stage and sang a beautiful ballad called "Leaving You." After it was over the singer announced that it was written by someone in the audience and asked the composer to stand up and take a

bow. I looked down, and it was my tweed man standing up. Ah!! So my future husband is a wonderful songwriter!! Excellent.

As the evening progressed I found out that he was in a relationship with one of the singers in the show, and so I left feeling a little smaller than when I arrived. The interesting thing was, however, that after that evening I couldn't stop thinking about that man.

Over the next several months I would meet someone and go on the occasional date, but every time I went out I compared my date to that mystery songwriter who seemed to have stolen my heart. No one made me feel how I felt when I thought about him, and the interesting thing was, I didn't even know anything about him.

Over the following two and a half years I pretty much stalked him -- I went to his shows, (had to introduce myself to him about 6 times before he remembered me), and then finally signed up for guitar lessons with him. I got up the nerve during our second guitar lesson to tell him what I had said to my girlfriend that first time I saw him. Needless to say, that information left

him looking at me like a deer caught in the headlights. I focused us back on our guitar to alleviate his shock, and the following day he sent me a sweet email expressing his appreciation for sharing my feelings, and he told me that although he felt a mutual attraction, he did have a girlfriend and he hoped that we could remain friends. Of course we could. I'd take whatever I could get.

At the end of the 2-1/2 year "stalking" period I learned that he was teaching at a songwriting summer camp in upstate New York. I registered for the event, bought a plane ticket and headed to the east coast. Luckily I had a tiny bit of songwriting experience, so I could pass as an interested student. My true goal, however, was to see if he "got" me. Getting to know him over the past years I had found out what a wonderful person he was, and I knew deep in my heart that he and I should be together. I looked at this week-long excursion to the Catskills as the trip that would tell me, one way or another, if I should give up on this man or not.

The first day of camp arrived and my heart was pounding, but I remained composed as he waved to me from across the field. His girlfriend at the time had five kids (the youngest of which was a very 'active' 5 year old) and Severin had actually driven with her and her entire family from LA to NY to the songwriting camp. That was the



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first time he had spent that much time with her entire family. I think a realization started to set in during that trip that theirs might not be the perfect relationship. The third day he approached me telling me that he was having some very strong feelings about me. "Welcome to my world" I thought. From that point on it was history, and I am grateful that he and his then girlfriend took that drive together!!!

He is the most wonderful man on the planet and I feel blessed every day I wake up to his sweet face next to me.

When I tell this story to single ladies my age, they tell me it gives them hope....



Neil and Bari Bucknam

This Valley girl wasn't going to pick up bags of manure, so she looked around for someone to help this "damsel in distress!"

A long time ago in land far away - not so far really - there lived a young Valley girl who got a job with Sears at the Northridge Mall, pre-earthquake. Her first day at work was in the Garden/Catalog Department. The staffing supervisor left this young girl alone on her first

day, and low and behold her first customer appeared. This elderly man asked her for 10 bags of manure. This Valley girl was not going to go and pick up bags of manure, so she looked around for someone to help this "damsel in distress!" She looked and looked and there in the corner, at Ticketron, was her Knight in Shining Armor! This Valley girl walked over and batted her eyes, and asked this young man if he would help her. He did and the rest is history!

Come this June we will be celebrating 32 years of marriage! The marriage has outlasted the Northridge earthquake; unfortunately, the building did not. It's now the Sears parking structure.

Rain
Episode One - 1970, Something

On a typical sunny day in Southern California, my friend Sy asks, "Would you like to go for a walk?" He is just my nice neighbor..., just my friend.



Sy and Leslie Kaplan

We are strolling along at a leisurely pace making light conversation as we cross Sunset Boulevard and begin to climb the Hollywood Hills.

Suddenly, the sky decides to change her dress from powder blue to a heath

ery gray and the sun that has warmed our path is no longer showing his face. We'd better head back, I'm thinking, at the same time that Sy remarks, "It looks like maybe we'd better head back." With little warning, the sound of thunder, followed by streaks of jagged lightning, illuminates the now, charcoal sky. Then much to our surprise, Niagara Falls comes down upon us.

In an instant we are drenched from head to toe. Rain is streaming down our faces. We can hardly keep our eyes open. At first, we laugh so hard that I think I peed. But you can't tell the pee from the rain, so it doesn't really matter. We look at each other again, and this time we do not laugh at all. He put one arm around me, lifted my chin with his free hand, and...we kissed. It is our first kiss.... a tender kiss... and a very wet kiss. That is the day we fell in love.

The Tenor Sax
Episode Two - 1980 Something

We are slow dancing close, hardly moving as we sway... his chest pressing firmly against my breast. The sweet sound of the Tenor Sax is blowing the blues. Barefooted, dressed only in our swim suits, I have never felt so free. He kisses my cheek.

The sky is our ceiling, the sea our front lawn. As if this moment isn't enough, the sky lights up as a tropical storm invades this island. The warm rain washes our tanned skin as we make a run for cover. We take refuge under the thatched roof of the open bar facing the ocean. Our bodies are wet, the margaritas are wet.... our kisses are wet. We toast each other as we watch the rolling, dancing waves. They too seem to be swaying to the Tenor Sax, blowing the blues.



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Sy passed away on April 7th 1989. My little grand daughter Erin was born on April 7th 2002.

All I need is a gray sky and a few drops of rain to awaken some tender recollections.



Charlotte Waisman and Jim Ottinger

Charlotte and I met in Newport News, Virginia at the Patrick Henry International Airport. Charlotte had been speaking at the College of William and Mary and I was selling steel at the Newport News shipyard. We met at a gate at the Piedmont Airlines. We were both trying to get on a flight from Virginia to Washington, DC. Charlotte was going to DC to speak and I was going there to catch a plane to Dallas where I lived.

The weather was awful, and I had already driven from Virginia Beach Airport - because it was closed due to fog - over to the Newport News Airport because it was still open. We sat at the gate for about three hours waiting for the flight to come in. They told us if a plane could land, it could take off. So every few minutes, we'd hear the announcement that the plane would be arriving shortly; there was just a slight delay.

The plane finally landed and we were excited. I think we were the only ones left at the gate because everyone else had given up. The flight crew comes off, and the Captain says to the Co-pilot, "No way in hell am I going back up in that soup." So we figured out real quick that the plane wasn't taking off.

So I said to Charlotte, "Well, it's been nice talking to you. I'm going to go get my car back at Hertz and drive to DC." So she walked over with me and said, "Would you mind if I rode with you?" Which kind of surprised me! She volunteered to pay for half of the car rental, and I said, "You don't have to pay any of it." I guess we'd been talking long enough to where she trusted me.

So I got the car and we drove together from Patrick Henry International Airport, in Virginia to Washington, DC. This was in 1977, and we started driving to DC, which was about 200 miles. What we didn't think about was if it was soup like that for airplanes, it would be soup like that for us driving. So we're creeping along in the fog and the rain, and it seemed like every two minutes because of the rain, Charlotte had to stop and go...to the bathroom....and we had to stop for dinner....and on and on, and we finally get to DC about 3:00 in the morning.

We exchanged business cards. I said to her, "I'd like to see you again." And she said, "Well, I live in Chicago and we'll probably never connect, but fine." Then a week later, I was in Cleveland and called her and said, "I'm coming through O'Hare Airport [in Chicago]. Could you come out tomorrow night for dinner at the airport? I have a three hour layover." And she said, "Sure, I have to come out to pick

up my son, Lyle, anyway."

My flight was delayed out of Cleveland because of snow and I ended up on another airline. Anyway, I arrived about three hours late. And this was before cell phones so I couldn't call her or anything. I got to the airport, and went to a white page and courtesy phone and asked them to page Charlotte Wise-man. I didn't even remember the proper pronunciation of her name [which is Waisman, pronounced Way-zz-man]. They said, "You'll have to select a gate to have your party meet you." I looked down the terminal as far as I could see and I picked a gate. It was the last one I could make out visually.

In those years you could go to the gate; there was no security to prevent that. The announcement came over the PA and I waited about 10 minutes and slowly walked toward that gate. When I got there, there was only one person who I could see in the gate area, and so I walked up behind her and said, "Oh I'm so glad you got my page." And she said, "What page? I gave up on you. I was here waiting for Lyle coming in at this gate." And that's how we met in November of 1977. We dated two years long distance - me in Dallas and Charlotte in Chicago. We were married on July 4, 1979 and will be celebrating 32 years of marriage. We currently live in Evergreen, Colorado.





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The Boy by Marsha Miller

This is a piece that I used in my cabaret show called "I Love Men." I incorporated it with a song called "Nothing Really Happened," written by Carnelia and Cuervo.

When I was 14 1/2, my mother allowed me to go along with a few of my friends to a teen social at Temple Isaiah Community Center in West L.A. I met lots of nice boys that night, but one in particular struck my fancy. He was really, really cute and way, way smart. Seventeen years old ... sweetly shy. Richard was his name.

The next day, while my girlfriend Ida and I were in the midst of a fierce Canasta tournament at my house, the telephone rang. I answered. I couldn't believe it. It was that boy. He asked, "Would you like to go with me and my friends this Saturday to see Cyrano De Bergerac? I answered, "One moment, please."

Excitedly, I clamped my hand over the mouth-piece of the phone and turned to Ida. Although we were the same age, I somehow figured her to be far worldlier than I. "Who is Cyrano De Berg...er...ac?" I whispered. Wanting to retain her air of superiority, she sighed as if annoyed, "Just some old French guy." Trying to sound as sophisticated as possible, I lowered my tiny voice to a Lauren Bacall lilt, "Why, I'd be happy to meet him." "I'll pick you up at 7," he said.

One ex-husband and three grown children later, I began thinking back about that boy. And about a special night we had together. A 1950s night. A night when nothing really happened. And yet. And yet...The truth is, I never ever stopped loving that boy.

I began to: **Wonder if I should write him. Wonder if I should call. Wonder if he'd remember at all!**

And so I did ... call. And he did ... remember.

He invited me to have lunch with him at Yamato's in Century City. I remembered that he used to like me in pretty dresses. And so I wore a pretty dress. And he used to like my hair long and in a page boy. And so I wore my hair long and in a page boy. When I drove up to the restaurant, I saw him standing across this little wooden bridge. He stepped over to greet me. What do you say to somebody you haven't seen in so many years? Do you say what you're thinking? Like: "Kiss me once, and kiss me twice, and kiss me once again. It's been a long, long time"?

Lunch was lovely. We talked. We laughed. We remembered. Even after all those years, we remembered that 1950s night and so much more. **Funny the things you think about. Funny the things you don't. Funny the things that fade away. Funny ... the things that won't.**

Over dessert, he reached across the table and brushed the hair away from my eye. And I knew my life had been changed forever.

Oh....and if you like happy endings, I've got one for you. That boy and I are going steady again... through this life's finals!

Richard (Dick) and I have been together this time 'round coming up on 31 years in August!





Classifieds

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