

# HIDDEN LEAVES

A Publication of the Ilan-Lael Foundation

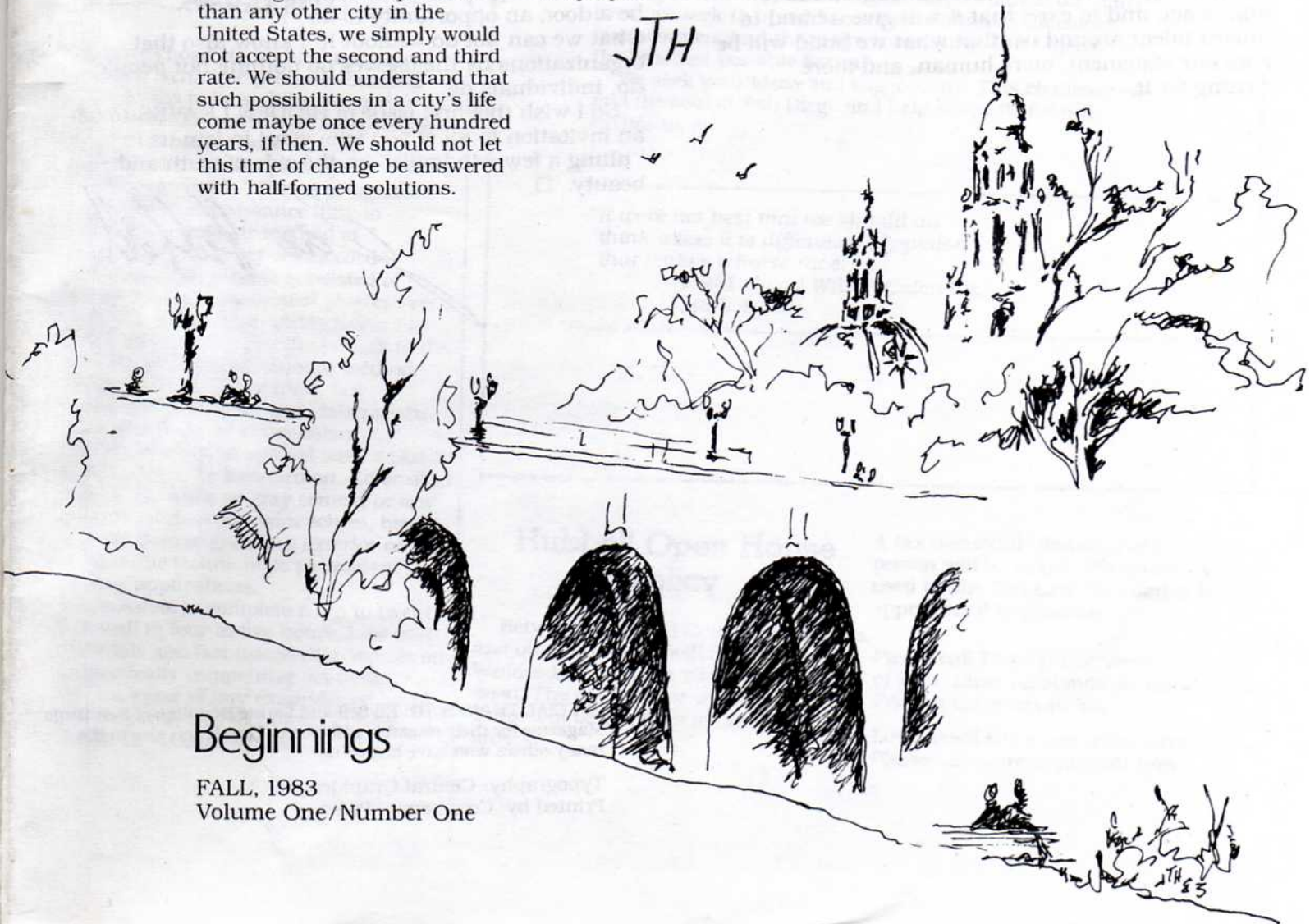
## For A Dash of Chauvinism

Is San Diego really at the beginning of a renaissance? Will it be a spiritual renaissance for San Diego and not just a merchant's dream of bigger and more? Do we understand and value the specialness, the genius of our place on this globe?

Is there enough chauvinism in San Diego of the kind that lifted city-states in Greece and later Italy into the times of pride for all men? Such a pride, if we allowed it to blossom, would have a profound effect on our city and region. If we realize that San Diego has more potential than any other city in the United States, we simply would not accept the second and third rate. We should understand that such possibilities in a city's life come maybe once every hundred years, if then. We should not let this time of change be answered with half-formed solutions.

The pride I speak of would not only affect land use and buildings, but business and government, community, crime, and the significance and quality of our art. Where does this kind of community come from? It comes from the beauty of Balboa Park, from the sweep of Coronado Bridge, from looking out to sea with so little between us and China. It comes from the Chargers winning, from the Old Globe, and from you. It should come from our artists. It comes from a vision and a sense of the uniqueness that is shared by all our people.

JTH



## Beginnings

FALL, 1983  
Volume One/Number One

I keep trying to answer the question, "What is the Ilan-Lael Foundation?" not only for friends but for myself. Since I have no intention of becoming a director of a foundation, why start one?

I guess the foundation began from the realization that art and beauty have been an intense part of my daily life, not remote commodities in a specialty store. A definition of what the foundation is about might be: "To encourage through art and architecture, an understanding of ourselves and our time, and facilitate the ability to visualize and create forms that reflect the best of our age."

The old command, "to know thyself," is as true for the individual as for a culture. If we wish to do anything of real meaning, it is also true that what we do, what we make, and build, is how we understand ourselves. The artist should play an irreplaceable role in human evolution, for his function is to make the vision and the mystery of our existence real.

Another reason for the foundation is the tremendous possibilities that can be unlocked from living in a time of transition in a city with the tremendous potential of San Diego—both in place and in people.

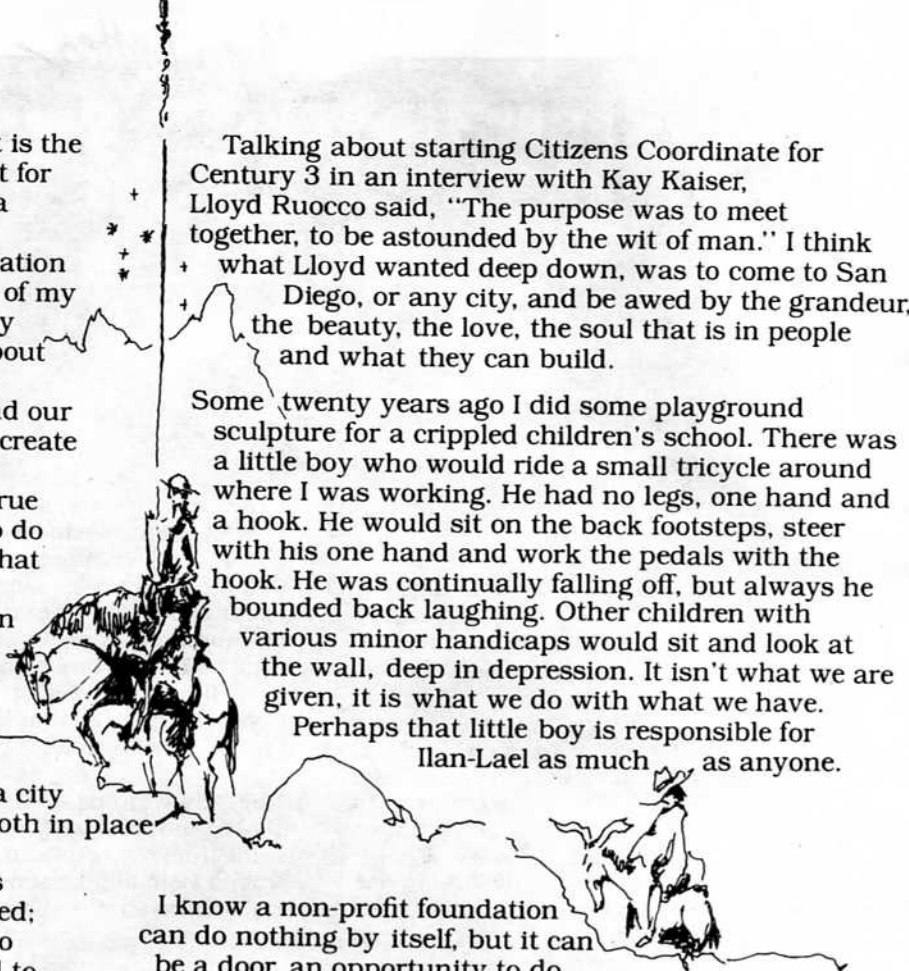
I am hoping the foundation can help to focus leadership and discussion where they are needed; that it will get people in various backgrounds to talk, to act, and to care; that it will give a hand to unused talent around us; that what we build will be more our statement, more human, and more exciting for it.

Talking about starting Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 in an interview with Kay Kaiser, Lloyd Ruocco said, "The purpose was to meet together, to be astounded by the wit of man." I think what Lloyd wanted deep down, was to come to San Diego, or any city, and be awed by the grandeur, the beauty, the love, the soul that is in people and what they can build.

Some twenty years ago I did some playground sculpture for a crippled children's school. There was a little boy who would ride a small tricycle around where I was working. He had no legs, one hand and a hook. He would sit on the back footsteps, steer with his one hand and work the pedals with the hook. He was continually falling off, but always he bounded back laughing. Other children with various minor handicaps would sit and look at the wall, deep in depression. It isn't what we are given, it is what we do with what we have. Perhaps that little boy is responsible for Ilan-Lael as much as anyone.

I know a non-profit foundation can do nothing by itself, but it can be a door, an opportunity to do what we can not do without it. I know also that organizations by themselves do nothing, but *people do*, individuals do.

So I wish this first issue of HIDDEN LEAVES to be an invitation to all of you who want to join us in "tilting a few windmills" on the side of truth and beauty. □



Leo Rubell

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Ed Self and Laurie Bertolino of San Diego Magazine for their research assistance. Thank you also to the many others who have helped us.

Typography: Central Graphics  
Printed by: Commercial Press

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## Beginnings

Editors  
KAY KAISER / JAMES HUBBELL

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HIDDEN LEAVES is published in San Diego four times a year by the Ilan-Lael Foundation, a state and federally licensed non-profit organization. Editorial address, P.O. Box 4871, San Diego, CA 92104.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Full Ilan-Lael membership: \$25.00 per year. Student Membership: \$15.00 per year. Subscription only: \$12.00 per year. Single issue price: \$5.00. Make checks payable to The Ilan-Lael Foundation.

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### LEGEND OF THE FIREBIRD

A long time ago in old Russia lived a beautiful girl whose weaving was a wonder to all. A wicked prince, jealous of her gift came as a large black bird to steal her for his own. He changed her into a beautiful firebird. So heartbroken was the maiden at having to leave her beloved home, that she fell from the sky, dead. Her radiant feathers scattered to all the



corners of the land, there to be covered by the falling leaves and dust of time. It is still believed by many that if one looks for truth and beauty within the earth, the beautiful feathers are still there, waiting to bring back the voices of the poets, and the magic of inspiration in the works of men.

We consider the beginning of the Ilan-Lael Foundation and this publication as a time of celebration—a time to reaffirm our faith in the wit of man and his potential to create things of beauty and nourishment for San Diego. It is only proper at such times to look back upon our predecessors and honor their gifts to us.

This first issue of HIDDEN LEAVES is dedicated to the late architect Lloyd Ruocco, his wife and interior designer, Ilse Ruocco, and architecture critic James Britton II. These active human beings encouraged, chastised, and supported us in our lives and our work. They taught new ways to look at things and reminded us of the constant, immutable rules of nature.

They were each other's friends for decades. If we can foster such friendships, that is achievement enough.

### What We Are About

HIDDEN LEAVES will be a forum of many voices discussing the fortunes of San Diego, and our connections to our evolving culture.

Since art distinguishes us as human beings, it will be the main focus, and our starting point. Architecture—perhaps the most complex of all arts because it must perform so many functions—will be prominent in our pages. Architecture is not a single building on a vast and empty plain—it is relationships between buildings, land, and people. We hope to investigate this interwebbing. There is art in relations between people and with ourselves. The ability to listen, feel, find delight, and recognize the things that make us truly human is perhaps the highest art.

The name, HIDDEN LEAVES, symbolically refers to our intent of uncovering things and people in San Diego worthy of celebration. It is the editors' position that not nearly enough energy of imagination is being applied to the chosen place. We hope to fill a gap in our city's information system by directing some light in new directions. Things need to be stirred up, examined, and perhaps poured into new molds. We need to do this together.

This first issue has too much of the editors in it. We will consider with sympathy any honest attempts—amateur or professional—to write briefly or at length about the arts and development in San Diego. This invitation also extends to photography and graphics.

HIDDEN LEAVES adheres to no political philosophy or party; it supports any activity that enhances the human condition.



John Oldenkamp

Lloyd Ruocco at Design Center in the 50's. The project was done on a tight budget and used some unusual building materials; the semi-translucent corrugated plastic paneling on some exterior walls gave inhabitants the added delight of changing shadow patterns of leaves.

*City, I am your child... fill me with life.*

Lloyd Ruocco, F.A.I.A.  
1907-1981

Lloyd Ruocco passionately argued for a minimalist architecture—a phantom architecture that allowed nature to show through. As a student at the Beaux-Arts-infused Berkeley in the 20's, he had already caught the fever of the modern movement; while his professors promoted monumental architecture that effectively kept buildings and nature separate, Lloyd believed that man's buildings could not equal the beauty of a tree.

The delightful results of his waywardness can be seen in San Diego at the Design Center on Fifth Avenue and Brookes, the geophysics lab on the Scripps campus at UCSD, a church in Clairemont (4905 Jellet Street), and in numerous residences. Each bears Lloyd's subtle signature—the gentle handling of the environment. Eucalyptus and jacaranda wave around building corners, tap on glass and wood walls, and poke through soaring walkways. You are in nature—as protected as man needs to be, yet intimately connected and surrounded by it.

Lloyd savored life; he tried always to get at the human heart of things. His homes and offices were created for his own enjoyment. Twenty-five years after Design Center was completed, he still stood on the balcony outside his office watching reflections in the glass walls and the seasonal change of the sun's angle on his buildings. Picking up leaves—one by one and putting them into a wicker basket—was a daily task, performed with such contentment, that the sight of it was a respite for all those working at their drawing boards inside.

But he knew there was a big world beyond his property lines and people who needed the same beauty he created for himself. He told his friends, "I've fixed up my home and office the way I like it. Now I've got to figure out what to do about the things in between."

For this—he knew he needed help. Lloyd found it when he formed Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 in the 60's.

The objective was to inspire San Diegans to have a voice in their city's future. It began as a freewheeling discussion group at his office after hours. He considered it an open house to strangers. The purpose was to be astounded by the wit of man.

The following is a portion of a 1975 taped conversation with Lloyd about the origin of that organization and his view on our urban condition.

"... Everybody came at whatever time they could and there were no rules or order . . . (People would) start to go—have their coats on—and then come back and talk some more. That's the best sort of thing there is for anybody . . . There was a new energy for everybody.

"We didn't get into anything precise until half-way down the first year. We realized we had to have some kind of standard. My idea was "HOW COULD YOU MAKE CITIES THAT WERE FIT TO LIVE IN?" That was a subject without limits.

"'Fit for living' means not just that the machinery works. When you're in this place—the city—this super city—all the complexities that man invents, his best outlooks, all converge. You are not then in a desert. You are at the focus, and you would always want to have the good luck to be in one of those places . . .

"... The nearest we got to it was Disneyland Number One and Two. A great big pulsating civilization. It's one step from Las Vegas, but it has beauty.

"Disneyland is a moneymaking proposition. You cannot then make any basic steps forward. You seem to be going forward because people see the little tricks—the technology. It looks modern and all that, but it's your brains I'm concerned about."

The late architecture critic, James Britton whose friendship with Lloyd spanned thirty years, wrote that "at his most urgent and fervid, Ruocco would sound like Walt Whitman and James Joyce both talking at once."

Lloyd Ruocco's words concerning the new urban center are an anthem for all those caught by the excitement of things to come:

"The center, the magic mountain, will be mammoth, complex and amazing. Inside will be total flexibility for change at minimum construction cost, with the supermaze of electronics, transport, storage, services and practical needs all aiming at functional simplicity.

"The outside will be all for surprise, with variety of architectural shapes, spaces, levels, masses, textures, conglomerations, interpenetrations, interlinkages, trompe l'oeil, transparencies, svelte simplicities, fountains and other crescendos, psycho-insinuating advertising displays, architectonic or fluidly wild manifestations of landscape, pleasure domes, kiosks, holes in the wall, peeps, subterranean crevasses, jewellike joy palaces perched elegantly on imagination, monoliths of seeming impenetrability deftly invadeable by those who would fly low loose and happy, translucent geometries for aesthetic mathematicians, fluid fluctuating actions of light and color whimsying the eye and illuminating the whole pulsating and people-packed panorama with life, art, and mystery . . .

"... The New Center will be a place packed with people day and night, masses and teeming cascades and streams of people, a multi-directional expositional amazement circuit like a million butterflies and birds in the heat of spring . . ." □ —Kay Kaiser

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*"The dream and action need to nourish each other." Anais Nin*

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