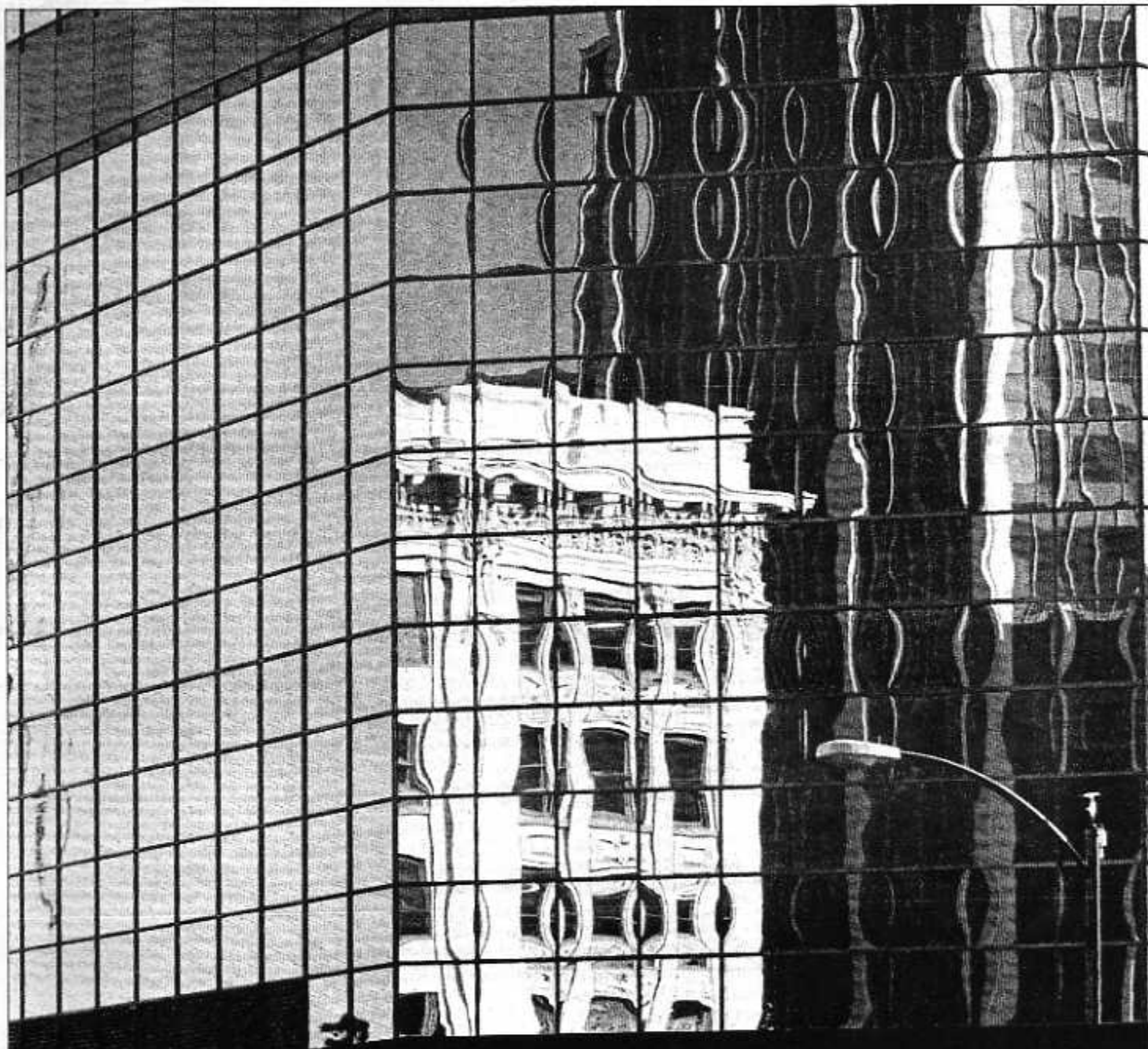


*Open Letter*

# HIDDEN LEAVES

A Publication of the Ilan-Lael Foundation



## San Diego In Search of Its Center

Volume One  
Number Three  
Spring, 1984

"As the years go by and all the investments are made, and the bright new buildings rise shouldering each other in the sky, how will we all feel about Centre City? Or perhaps it is too much to ask that anybody have any feelings about anything as practical as their city. But a really important question is whether a city exists at all without its most important treasures being at its center. And to be treasures they must do a lot more than merely be practical. They must be surprisingly good and easily lovable. One should feel thankful for being a citizen of such a city." Lloyd Ruocco, FAIA



In the sixties and seventies, people rejected cities in regimental numbers and "returned to the land." Or suburbia. Their objective was to find elemental truth and harmony in what nature could provide. The extremists grew their own food, built a cabin in the wildwood, and reduced their needs. "The Whole Earth Catalogue" and "Foxfire" became a combination Bible and survival guide for these urban expatriots. Canning vegetables and reading the classics by oil lamp replaced a performance by the Bolshoi Ballet as a life-event.

## Real



By the eighties, almost everybody came back. Either the land wasn't as hospitable as they had hoped, or close relationships in relative isolation strained, or maybe they felt something was missing. They came back to the city to find it. Most of us are still looking for "It."

Today, some of these people say they like "real cities." New York, Stockholm, Chicago, or Paris are mentioned because of their rich history, the variety of people to watch, and the things to do. They like traditions—sour-dough bread and wine in San Francisco's North Beach, the well-placed cafes in Paris, and buying chestnuts to warm the fingers in Geneva during the first chill of

## City?

This third issue of *Hidden Leaves* is dedicated to the children of San Diego. They will remember the places we showed them and what they did in the city. If what we build gives them a bright memory of childhood—full of events and merry noise, color and intriguing spaces—it won't hurt us big kids, either.

autumn. When we asked them about downtown San Diego, they snickered and repeated that they liked "real cities."

But let's examine what we've got here. We have made a good start. Our site is a most spectacular place for a city—an amphitheater with the sea as a stage. Our history is full of individuals who created a world-famous park and zoo plus the organizations working for the continuance of sensitive planning. The mix of residents is rich enough for any city: university people and transients; businessmen vic for the same chair in the cafe with theatre people, musicians, and artists; Latinos enriched our sense of design as much as settlers from Minnesota. People who take the long view of the future use phrases like "world-class city"

and delight in seeing the sea, the mountains, and dollar signs reflected in mirrored glass. Even the most pragmatic official city planners are aware that human scale and nighttime activity pump life into downtown. We already have pioneers in Gaslamp and the city is trying to draft regulations for the expeditious inclusion of strolling musicians.

All this sounds pretty good. The big question is how to fit the things we want into what is already here. How do we make a bond between people and their city so they demand it to be an exciting, jumping place? What is still left undone?

We can't provide the answers immediately, but we can raise the questions. The answers will come when enough of us ask the right questions.—KK—

# HIDDEN LEAVES

## San Diego in Search of its Center

Editors  
Kay Kaiser/James Hubbell

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## *The City at the End of the Twentieth Century*

I have long held that ignorance is fruitful ground for accomplishment. Certainly to set out in twenty-eight pages of *Hidden Leaves* to describe our city at the end of the twentieth century is enough to make even Don Quixote snigger!

At the beginning of our quest for ideas and answers, we were met with many questions: "San Diego . . . a city?" "Aren't cities a thing of the past?" Luckily, we came upon a beautiful kernel by Lewis Mumford in his *The City In History*. It boosted our spirits and carried us through this issue.

"Before modern man can gain control over the forces that now threaten his very existence, he must resume possession of himself. This sets the chief mission for the city of the future: that of creating a visible regional and civic structure, designed to make man at home with his deeper self and his larger world, attached to images of human nurture and love.

"We must now conceive the city, accordingly, not primarily as a place of business or government, but as an essential organ for expressing and actualizing the new human personality—that of 'One World Man.' The old separation of man and nature, of townsman and countryman, of Greek and barbarian, or citizen and foreigner, can no longer be maintained: for communication, the entire planet is becoming a village; and as a result, the smallest neighborhood or precinct must be planned as a working model of the larger world. Now it is not the will of a single deified ruler, but the individual and corporate will of its citizens, aiming at self-knowledge, self-government, and self-actualization, that must be embodied in the city. Not industry but education will be the center of their activities; and every process and function will be evaluated and approved just to the extent that it furthers human development, whilst the city itself provides a vivid theatre for the spontaneous encounters and challenges and embraces of daily life."

If Ilan-Lael can hasten the vivid merger of art and building, nature and people in San Diego, we have met our goal. If we can remove barriers—physical and psychological—so people can move easily, visit, find bridges, argue with each other, find stimulus, and feel they *belong* in San Diego, we can claim a "world class city."

Please excuse our amateur status as urban designers; our only experience is the knowledge that cities are for people.—JTH—



Architect Sim Bruce Richards arrived early at the Victorian mansion overlooking a holographic representation of San Diego Bay, circa 1885. The Heavenly climate was San Diego-like . . . in the low seventies on a spring evening. But Richards was wondering what his first reception *Up There* would be like. He always liked parties, especially if they were in his honor, but this was different—a whole other realm.

the door without ceremony. "I am Alonzo Horton and you're the first to arrive."

As he walked inside, Richards noticed Jon Jerde renderings tacked to the wall for the Horton Plaza shopping center. He hadn't cared much for the project, but stood bewildered at seeing them here.

"Mr. Horton . . ."

"Please, everybody calls me 'Father Horton'—even up here."

"I can't help but wonder how you got these drawings . . ." Richards said looking to see if they appealed to him more in Heaven. No, they were the same.

"My dear Mr. Richards—may I call you Bruce?—you will learn soon enough that Heaven is light-years ahead of earth in communications. Andrew Carnegie and Tom Edison devised a special library borrowing system by which we can get anything from earth overnight, copy it, and return it by morning. No one ever notices."

"Sort of an 'Angel Express'?"

"No, Carnegie insisted on calling it 'Andrewgram' and The Lord, after much pondering, consented."

"Well, Father Horton, what do you think of your plaza, 114 years later?"

"I'm glad they're finally doing something about that plot of land. Don't know if anybody'll go there, though. I still find the idea of a shopping center a little baffling. I spent all my money and

energy getting New San Diego going—then lost everything in the Panic of '83, you know. Then they threw it all away and built in Mission Valley. Even Marston's left . . ."

There was a gentlemanly knock at the door and, as if on cue, in stepped George W. Marston.

"George, you made it!"

"You know how I always like to greet arrivals from San Diego. Bruce Richards is somebody I've been watching for some time. He just opened his own office when I died in 1946, but I had heard of him. And, of course, Frank Lloyd Wright has been carrying on about him up here for almost thirty years."

"Where is Mr. Wright?" Richards asked, eyes full of light. "I've been looking for him."

"Oh, he's out in the mesas behind the clouds with a bunch of young angels. They're building something big. He finds we understand the 'harmony of the whole' a lot better up here," replied Horton.

# Heaven's Grate

By M.M. Marchand  
& Minnie



"Mr. Marston," Horton continued. "We were just talking about Horton Plaza and the new shopping center."

"Yes, I campaigned for something new back in '06. Got John Nolen and Irving Gill involved, but that rascal Louis Wilde plunked down \$10,000 for Nolen's fountain and we lost the opportunity to expand the plaza and make it a real civic square."

"But don't you think it's a travesty what they're doing with Gill's plan?" Richards asked, realizing he would have little to contribute tonight if everyone was as up-to-date as Horton and Marston.

"Bruce, you can ask Gill himself over dessert at Jesse Shepards. I would rather talk about something more disturbing—the new Naval Hospital in Florida Canyon. THAT is a travesty!"

"Gentlemen," Horton interrupted. "Let's get on with the soup. Bea Evenson cooked up some great minestrone."

Evenson, wearing a Committee of 100 scarf around her neck brought in

the piping-hot soup dangerously close to Marston. "You just wait until the city gets Inspiration Point back from the Navy. You'll be sorry you badmouthed the Navy all those years."

"Just because the Chamber of Commerce put you on TV and now wants to name a street after you at the hospital doesn't mean you will need to defend that \$381 million beige elephant," Marston intoned. "I think it's the ugliest thing since—excuse me, Father Horton—Horton's Wharf! Wait 'til I get Ed Meese, Bob Wilson, and the entire Naval Facilities Engineering Command up here!"

"What makes you think they'll get up here?" Richards injected.

"Now, Marston," Horton said. "Balboa Park needed something in Florida Canyon."

"Florida Canyon! It looks as much like Florida as this place looks like the Everglades!"

The doorbell signaled the arrival of Kate Sessions. She glided in with a

fresh carnation pinned to her linen blouse. "Father Horton, I've come for Mr. Richards. The others are waiting."

Evenson and Marston were shaking their spoons at one another as Richards made his apologies and departed.

"Don't worry about them," she said as they floated through the evening air. "They never agree about anything."

Marston is still complaining about the placement of the Exposition buildings in the middle of the park and leaving them there after the fairs in '16 and '36."

Richards, glad to have experienced such zesty conversation (He had feared Heaven would be dull.), began to look around him. "Who planted all these plumosa palms?"

"Why, Mr. Richards . . . where do you think all those palms went when the Port ripped up the Harbor Drive landscaping? And where do you suppose the eucalyptus trees went when the Zoo asphalted its parking lot? I have an open purchase order to bring all the trees and shrubs to San Diego Corner. I

can't wait to see Joe Yamada's face when he gets here . . . Hed better not even joke about the old copper-nails-in-the-palm-tree-trick . . . "

Shortly they arrived at a mysterious domed structure. It seemed transplanted from India. The fragrance of incense met them at the doorstep. Suddenly, he realized where he was.

"Oh, Gawd," he thought, but looked immediately from side to side and then up, realizing that up Here you don't call upon Gawd in vain.

"Good evening, Mr. Richards. I am—"

"Madame Tingley?" he answered, smiling politely. Bruce knew that in Heaven, you had to be open-minded.

"Yes, and welcome to Theosophical Center II. This is a nondenominational community and The Lord permitted me to reestablish my institution as long as I didn't publish any more religious tracts. He has exclusive rights in that department."

They drifted inside the exotic residence. Suddenly, a familiar face poked out from behind the curtains. It was James Britton, the architectural review curmudgeon and one of Richards' favorite thinkers.

"It's about time you arrived. Been almost a year since we've seen each other, hasn't it?" Britton said, smiling down on his old friend.

"Jim . . . It's so good to see a familiar face—"

"Gentlemen—to the parlor, please."

They followed the woman whose feet never seemed to touch the floor into a room where a buffet dinner waited. Curried rice, Chinese rice wine, and stuffed fig leaves were eaten. Many times Richards' and Britton's eyes met over the table and they laughed at the peculiar tricks fate plays. The other guests began to introduce themselves.

"I'm John Nolen. I'd like your opinion about the goings-on at the waterfront. My plans in 1908 and 1926 have yet to be carried out. And now I see the Port plans this big box—a convention center—whatever that is!"

Richards lighted a cigarette despite the glare from Madame Tingley. "I was gone before the design competition began. Who won?"

"Ward Deems," Britton reported. "I rather liked Welton Becket's big box. The Port deserves to be boxed-in on the Bay. They could call it 'Nay's Cube!' " But I would have preferred Ellerbe's domes. Better yet, why not Martinez and Wong's lighthouses, Ellerbe's domes, Deems' tents, and Luckman's pyramid all mounted on Becket's Box?"

"Please, Jim," Nolen sighed, "this is serious business. They may have ignored my plans, discarded my paseo to the Park, my recreation center at Date Street, my transportation center at the foot of Broadway, but let's not gloss over this thing. This is big and it's on the Bay . . . Bruce, why do they want a

convention center anyway?"

"I don't know. I never had use for one. Too many funny hats, fat delegates, stale popcorn. Give San Diegans a pile of money and they'll find a way to design something that looks cheap and unfriendly to us little humans. Everybody is running around trying to be 'in-no-va-tive' but not bothering to look for quality. A building—particularly a big building—has to be at ease on its site . . . Oh, Gawd, I want to talk with Mr. Wright . . . "

"What San Diego needs," Tingley offered, "is more plants, less people, more musings, less monuments."

Kate Sessions had been watering some of Tingley's wilting vines during the conversation. She occasionally looked over her shoulder with great compassion. "Gentlemen—we're painting a peculiar picture of Heaven for Bruce with all this argument. Try to understand—we are far removed from earth and San Diego, but we can't help but turn our attention every few years to our city. We worked so hard to make something out of it. It's just that San Diego strives for greatness and settles for sameness. We want them to do better!"

Tingley lighted another stick of incense and waved it through the smoke from Bruce's cigarettes. "Mr. Nolen—you saw San Diego's potential better than most city planners. What do you think of the city now?"

"It's not too late to regain the momentum. San Diego lost the railroad, but got Sea World. It lost MCC, but kept Dr. Scuss. Mr. Britton and I have had long discussions about it. Glenn Rick joined us the other day. We feel that leadership is still needed to encourage excellence."

Richards' eyes narrowed. "I came to San Diego in 1940 and have waited ever since for brilliance. I have a confession to make and this sure is the place to do it—I told people I didn't like cities, but that was because I'd get fed up. I cared too much about San Diego. And people. Pete Wilson showed promise but then retired to the Senate. Roger Hedgecock looked better than some . . . "

Kate Sessions glanced up from her *Sunset Magazine* and said, "That's our fault. We should have given the boy some guidance from up here. We have people on it now, though."

They heard a knock on the door and in rushed Bill Kettner to take Bruce to the next stop. They marched through the night, with Richards casting a wary eye at the man responsible for bringing the Navy to San Diego. In the distance, he saw a shimmering tower, an exact duplicate of the Villa Montezuma. He wasn't sure if he could handle another mystic. Jesse Shepard was at the piano completing Chopin's 'Minute Waltz' in fifty-seven seconds. Bruce was glad Britton agreed to go along.

"Mr. Richards," Shepard said suddenly, "I'm so sorry that Bertram Goodhue could not join us. He and Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo are busy making plans for the 450th anniversary of the discovery of San Diego. There are enough of us here for a scance, tho . . . "

They sat around a large oak table, tarts and tea in hand. The lights dimmed and a hush blanketed the room. Slowly, they joined hands.

"Our purpose this evening, oh, spirit of the city, is to reach the people of San Diego. We fear they have lost interest in civic affairs and spend their time rollerskating around Mission Bay. Without a concerned citizenry, the quality of city life will never rise."

Shepard's voice penetrated every cell of his guests' bodies and minds. They thought as one to wish a flood of awareness upon the city they loved. They saw children by the sea, birds darting from branch to branch in Balboa Park, and elegant buildings shouldering their way to the sky. For a man who didn't like cities, Bruce missed San Diego very much.

It was well after midnight when Richards and Britton left the party. They stopped for a moment under a streetlight at the corner:

"We don't spend all our time contemplating San Diego's missed opportunities. Up Here, you can venture far afield to whatever subject or place you wish. I was chatting with Mao Tse-tung just yesterday about Chinese cities. What a problem they've got!" Britton said, fired by the challenge.

"When did you learn to speak Chinese?"

"Language is no barrier up Here. You're only limited by your imagination. Imagine having lunch with Christopher Wren or L'Enfant? Corbu and Van Gogh . . . Too bad Hubbell and his little sidkick can't be here."

"No. They have to stay down there and do something yet!" Bruce answered.

"Well, see you tomorrow. Come to lunch and we'll talk about neighborhood parks and cluster housing."

"I'll be there. Bless you!"

Thank you to Clare Crane for her historical source material in "Twelve Who Shaped San Diego."



We asked people to imagine what they would like to see downtown. They could forget the burden of zoning, licensing, and financing to concentrate on what would make the heart of San Diego jump.

Judge for yourself, but it seems that we have accomplished much more difficult things in San Diego.

**Around  
Downtown  
San Diego**

# Take a Gambol

*From John Nolen's "San Diego: A Comprehensive Plan for its Improvement," published in 1908 by the San Diego Chamber of Commerce's Civic Improvement Committee.*

The present, therefore, is a most propitious time to consider in a frank, clear-headed and comprehensive manner the future of San Diego. As never before, it seems now to have the opportunity to lay firm hold on its heritage.

Happily, it is still within the power of the people of San Diego to make their city convenient, attractive and beautiful . . . Each generation has spent too much time in lamenting the errors of the past and has given too little attention to the opportunities of the present.

My feeling is that parking under the pedestrian preserve is a 'must'. But . . . instead of digging below ground for this it seems far better to raise the entire pedestrian preserve to second-story level. Convert all the present streets and the first floors of buildings for parking. Raise the shops and the entrances of buildings to the second story. Roof over all the streets with concrete and earth to fallout-shelter specifications . . . and you will be quite ready for the brave new world.—James Britton—Architecture Critic

I'd like to see a statue of a big tuna fish in the middle of Horton Plaza.

John Oldenkamp



*Why not a large area lemon in Lemon Grove...*



John Oldenkamp

**Chalk Corner—**

An area in the city—perhaps a small sunny plaza where chalk is available for anyone—kids and grown-ups to draw on the paving. It would be a chance to say what you want in pictures to be adored by all . . .

A place for street puppet shows—for kids and adults. Imagine three minute skits to watch while the lights change.—JTH—

You people at City College—think of downtown as part of the campus. Use the resources of the city for educational stimulation. Use your classes and events to enliven downtown.

Bring Mingel Gallery downtown.

Could the Zoo create an aviary on a downtown walkway—a wonder to pass through?

Venice Revisited—The land near the Harbor is low enough that you could create canals and small lakes making water an integrated element of the plan . . . Put some fish in them. To watch or to catch. For meditation or for sushi.

All around there will be small, quiet nooks, little gardens, gentle things like fountains, various sizes and kinds of retreats, for views, snacks, composure, and watching each other. Perhaps even vari-temperated pools to have your feet in!—Lloyd Ruocco—



## What is the Center of the Center?

"In trying to imagine what might be a basic necessity in guaranteeing the lasting values of Centre City, the very first thing that comes to mind is the thought that the center itself needs a center. And such a simple and adamantly important requirement as the center of the center could easily be overlooked in the scuffle of collaboration, zoning, auto intoxication, financing, Public Relations, and the general awkward anticipation of Utopia.

"Anything which might inspire to be the heart of the Centre should arouse warm-hearted admiration both for its appearance and for its function."

Lloyd Ruocco, FAIA *Omnitart Magazine*, 1962

### In Search of the Right Word

When we talk about the center of the center in the city, we have in mind the kind of thing found in an ancient village—perhaps a great tree or a spring . . . a place that gives meaning and connects the people to the village. It gives a place a soul. In a city, it can be many things—a cathedral, a park, a marketplace, or a river. What is it in San Diego? What is the word for it?—JTH—

The heart of San Diego is Balboa Park. Cities with a feeling of a center always have a lot of open space . . . like Saint Mark's Square in Venice. Our mistake was to cut through the south end of the park with the freeway. I can remember when you could step across Seventh and Date and be in the park. Not only did they rip out 200 trees planted in 1900 and replace 37 acres of beautiful land with a trench, they separated the park from the downtown area. It's what got me mad enough to become involved with C3 in the sixties. I'm happy that the Convention Center site did not turn out to be on El Cortez Hill because then it would have been the focus. That wouldn't have been right . . . Actually, Cedar Street is still somewhat of a mess. We can't have it lined with government buildings at this point, but maybe a plan with semi-public buildings could be thought about again. It would tie the waterfront and the park together . . . — Esther Scott—Original President, Citizens Coordinate for Century 3.

The County Administration Center should have been the center—if they had completed the Cedar Street Mall . . . Horton Plaza and the Grant Hotel could have been if it had been planned—properly . . . Hahn's Horton Plaza might be it, but that's still pie-in-the-sky thinking . . . — Dottie Muth—Secretary to Board of Supervisor Patrick Boarman.

I would repeat my suggestion of some years ago: I would like to see an 'Avenue of Flags' starting at City Hall and going down Second Avenue to the waterfront and radiating off from there. The Hahn development is an enhancement to that, and the 'Avenue of Flags' would tie in the government buildings to the Convention Center and would also tie in downtown San Diego to the waterfront.

I understand there is some acceptance of the concept at the Center City Development Corporation. If we could start the groundwork now before a lot more high rises are built, there could be a re-evaluation of the Marina Housing area, with aim of having a gradation of building heights from the waterfront up the hill, with only four or five stories in height at the waterfront.

They need to make the rules now, while there can be some support for that.

—Frank Curran—Former Mayor of San Diego for two terms. Now a consultant for Central City Association.

It's nice to talk about reviving downtown San Diego, but maybe we're missing the point. No matter how well we do it, we will only touch a relatively few people in the San Diego region.

The Gas Lamp district for example, is for a few yuppies, which is fine. But the basic development is for corporate interests, not for people.

With the proliferation of regional malls, the direction now is toward spreading and thinning. We all want to live in a small town, but the only way you can do that while living in a big town is with multiple identifiable downtown neighborhoods. Maybe we should be pouring the effort we put in developing center city into improving the neighborhood centers that touch more people. For example, in places like El Cajon, Ocean Beach, Hillcrest, Imperial Beach, La Jolla.

—Richard Louv—Local free-lance writer, author of one book, "America II," now a special columnist for the San Diego Union.

As more and more of San Diego's tuna fishing fleet leaves our docks, let's hope the waterfront space isn't all taken up by a lot of little boutiques and souvenir shops . . .

Some open dock space and waterfront should be left for San Diego's work boats and their activities, such as net mending. Tourists and natives alike enjoy watching that kind of thing, and it doesn't cost them. The real center of San Diego and what could be an identifying characteristic could be all around the Embarcadero from Broadway past Seaport Village, all that dock and walk way area.

After all, San Diego is a bayside town. That's where the center should be and more space should be saved there for activities that are unique to a bay front.

—Roy Everingham—Native-born San Diegan. Fisherman, pilot. His net boat fleet provides all the live bait—mostly anchovies—for San Diego's four million dollar sportfishing industry.

Perhaps it is a gut feeling. In my case, one finds this at Mission Bay—the synergy of sun, water, wildlife (especially birds, with their freedom expressed in easy movement). That is my 'center' of San Diego. Other meaningful areas include parts of Balboa Park and the ocean walk at Scripps Park.

—Igor Lobanov—Former editor of San Diego Business Forum Magazine. Now a well-known free-lance writer in the areas of science, business, travel.

# gambols

Go stand on Sixth Avenue at about Date Street in late May and see the jacarandas bloom. Then go tell the Planning Department that people would be extra careful when walking around the slippery fallen blossoms if they could be guaranteed the sight of the blue-purple lace against gray concrete—forever.—Androgynous Bosch—

Late-Breaking News: The ban on jacaranda trees has been lifted. The city now considers slippage on the blossoms to be an act of God. Officials realize that nothing is fool-proof and there is no way to make the world perfectly safe.—Ed.—

## Sportsville, U.S.A.

Give the YWCA and the YMCA the mandate to make Center City an athletic center. Sponsor footraces, volleyball, games, and exercises for everybody. Do it at noon and on weekends. Run around the fountains, dance on the stairways. Remember the big production number of George Gershwin's "I'll Build A Stairway to Paradise" . . . Think of Rocky running through Philadelphia with all the kids chasing after him . . . and Gene Kelly tap dancing in the puddles and swinging on the lampposts.

More often than not I would prefer to walk in the rear alley, precisely for all those little hints of life, activity and transition which the placid visual arts of suburbia did their best to suppress or politely disguise.—Lewis Mumford—

Years ago, close to the center of Mexico City, there was a small street filled with cantinas which offered food, drinks, and music. Each cantina had its own group of Mariachis. In addition, there were groups of Mariachis for hire. You knew that music was there for the listening or to take along to serenade a "novia" or a private party.

If you entered a cantina with a group of people, it was not unusual for a Mexican man in the group to "ad-lib" a song to his lady. If there was another man who cared for the same lady, he would then continue the song, one key higher, a sort of dual of words, not stopping until the other was "speechless" or couldn't match a verse. Meanwhile, the music could be enjoyed by all within carshot.

I wish San Diego had a similar street! —Ann Roberti —

Do away with cars—a bicycle is about as far as mankind should have gone. With a bicycle, you have the good sense of using your muscles, and if you make a mistake, usually you live to learn from it.

## A Bicyclist's Dream

Making a left on Broadway, my fantasy takes over. Broadway is a shaded bicycle-pedestrian mall. It's April. The fragrance is mock orange in bloom. A whiff of the harbor reminds me of the tuna cannery smell of my childhood, given way to cruise ships and tall freighters.

The Horton Plaza has a gazebo with bright pansies and star jasmine. Making a right to go south on 4th Avenue, I decide to visit the bicycle repair shop in the Gaslamp area. "Old Faithful" has been serving me since 1950, and needs minor adjustment of the 9th gear. It only takes a minute while I inspect the shower room and lockers for bicycle commuters.

Melvin's, on the corner of Fifth and F, has the best fresh fruit smoothies downtown. I drink several glasses of filtered water with lemon twist. They were putting fresh carnations on the white tablecloths when I left.

Returning to the outside, I'm aware of the shadows cast by tall buildings, each with a different entrance. My eye is caught by an attractive window display. I'll return to try on that yellow and blue outfit. There are bike racks conveniently located everywhere downtown.

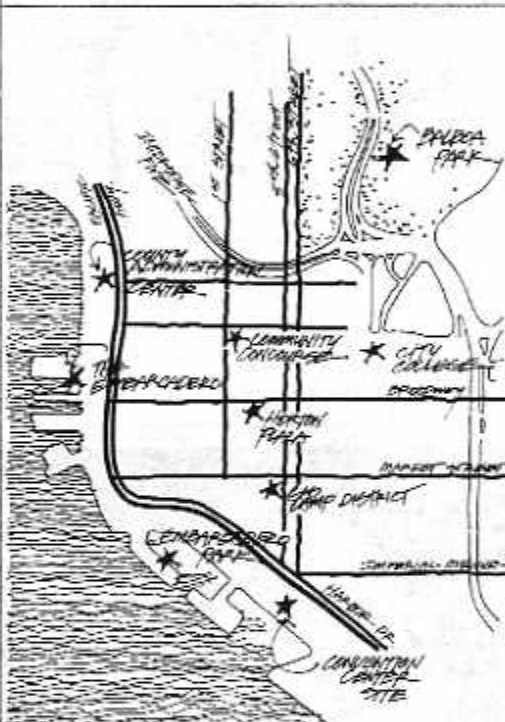
The sounds downtown are the tinkle of other bicycle bells and the greetings of people meeting friends on the sidewalks. The quiet allows me to think as I plan my day. I will arrive at my destination alert and relaxed.

Pedaling toward the Embarcadero, I see maples leafed-out with fresh green. I resolve to take the bicycle-pedestrian ferry to Coronado the first chance I get.

The future downtown of my dream is not far-fetched. Scott Monte is our City Bicycle Coordinator. There are 48 bike lockers in the Community Parkscapes. Scott Jones will add them to any Ace lot, near the exit, as the demand warrants. There are shower facilities in the Federal Building, Gas and Electric Building, and Community Concourse.

Bill Schempers will advise architects on Horton Plaza plans to include bicycles. There is a Center City Parking Committee.

At last, humble bicyclists are being given the space and respect they deserve in downtown San Diego, to the benefit of all the people.—Mary Jessop—



CENTER CITY

Drawing: Patrick O'Connor



Cynthia Sabranski



Richard Snyder



## Children's Gallery

We would like to suggest the idea of a downtown Children's Gallery. It is a small, playful building set in a plaza surrounded by trees and flowers. The steps to the sun-filled place are cast with shapes of dragons and heroes. Fountains hold real fish and stone frogs. Instruments make music with the hands of children on them. Kinetic fun pieces. Movies. A place for a child's imagination to do cartwheels.

Wind harps and poetry. A puppet theatre. Blackboard floors for drawing. A place to sit on a thick rug and listen to a story-teller.



Sculpture: Richard Kornhauser



Ancient art together with the rainbows from the sun in stained glass. The magic of the laser.

Let's do it. Before we all grow up. Surely there is a pocket somewhere downtown for a jewelbox like this.

—JTH—

## San Diego's Orphan Convention Center

Mike Stepner is San Diego's Assistant Planning Director. He was a surprise because the word "do-able" crept into his language more often than "not possible at this time." Stepner realizes he is involved with a city with potential, and knows that the future life of downtown depends on the establishment of a resident base, entertainment, and service.

Now that the Convention Center situation is hopefully resolved, the City is looking with new interest at the Community Concourse—that heartless wind-tunnel and aesthetic black-hole since its inception. Perhaps it can receive a face-lift substantial enough to propel it into the living fabric of downtown.

Intended to be a symbol for the City of San Diego, it is a complex with no function. It was designed by committee because the City didn't want to offend any particular architectural firm. Money was tight even then, but as Mr. Stepner says, "They spent a lot of money in order to make it look inexpensive."

The Planning Department realizes the Concourse must expand its function with day-time and night-time activities tied to developments at Horton Plaza and all of downtown. Initial ideas range from moving the Public Library into the space, to staging a farmer's market or art fair in the open areas and interior spaces. Punching through to B Street could eliminate the closed off end of the complex. They even contemplate knocking everything down and starting over with private rather than government buildings.

Whatever the final decision, Stepner tells us that the first problem is that unless you're a conventioneer, there's no reason to go there. With the Symphony moving into the Fox Theatre, there's even less reason for braving the cyclonic winds. "It's a dead space. Blank walls facing out to the Concourse . . . We've got to start by resurfacing so it's not so cold all the time. Then begin to restructure it for some activity."

A few years ago, Mayor Pete Wilson in association with "Partners for Livable Places" arranged a project with environmental design students at San Diego State University to determine what to do with the Concourse. Their findings supported the idea that the most important thing was to warm up the space. They conceived standard solutions with colored banners—some large enough to be seen for half-a-mile, flags, and fountains. (Their specifications didn't indicate whether the water was warm or cold.) One ingenious scheme involved giant mirrors to collect the light and heat from the sun to be cast into the walkways. Laws of physics suggest that the plan subjects Concourse visitors to spontaneous combustion. The City, already worried about people slipping on mere jacaranda blossoms, would never approve a plan as dangerous as this. And a lady with her hair on fire overdoes the concept of warmth in urban planning. But the hearts of the students were in the right place.

The City is in the process of retaining consultants to solve some of these problems for real. By the time this sees print, the choices may have been made, but that doesn't preclude our involvement. It is our feeling that some of the best designers and artists in San Diego are reading this page. Get involved now. Call us. Call the City Planning Department. This project is no utopian

dream. As Stepner tells us, it is a "do-able" improvement.

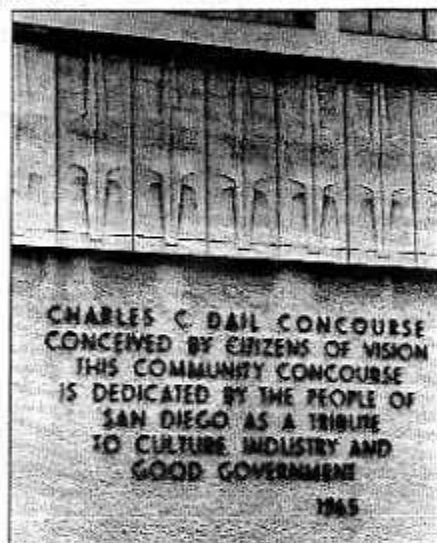
We have the chance to make something great out of an error of the past. We have the shell; we just need to put the sound of the ocean in it.

Mike Stepner left us with the thought that "we bureaucrats are 'servants

of the public.' That means we do not instigate action; we respond to the will of the people." If the will of the people is beauty and human value, our government will respond. Try it. But don't wait too long on this one. Second chances don't come every day.—KK—



Oldenkamp



It is curious to me that spending money for public works is such a suspect proposition in San Diego. The convention center, downtown redevelopment, mass transit—any project requiring public investment—tends to be treated as some sort of sinister threat.

There's an attitude that seems to say: If private enterprise doesn't want to build it all by itself, there must be something wrong with it. And there's a tendency to worry that some favored private interest

might get a sweet deal out of a public project, rather than to consider the potential benefits to the public at large.

Of course, other cities have proven time and again that public works projects can generate cost overruns and graft just as easily as public benefits, so skepticism is always in order. But the reaction here seems to go beyond skepticism. And I can only wonder whether the attitude is saving us from publicly financed disasters, or limiting our future.—Wayne Swanson—

# VIVACITY



We see theatre. Lots and lots of theatre in the heart of the living museum that is the Gaslamp Quarter. The best new voices of the theatre will mingle with the classic voices of the past. People will crowd the streets, bursting with the excitement and anticipation of seeing a show. They will crowd in, shoulder to shoulder, to be touched, entertained, moved, amused, uplifted and provoked. Theatre magic will transform storefronts, warehouses, and even the street. Actors, directors, producers and audiences will pack the bars, restaurants, coffee houses, pubs, bookstores, delis and shops afterwards, discussing, debating and releasing. Above the action, in lofts, flats and townhouses, urban dwellers will curse the melee and love every minute of it. Music will be heard up and down the street and chic La Jollans will buy a hot dog and cruise. Galleries will be filled to overflowing on Saturdays and parents with small children will discuss art and buy a balloon. Old men will play chess in the park at 4th and Island as groups of noisy school children disturb their peace.—Kit Goldman—Gaslamp

Quarter Theatre

I'm a city kid. I love downtowns—Paris, New York, London, even Chicago, my home town. I'm ready to go to downtown San Diego. I want to rub shoulders in the streets with people who look like they're busy—lawyers, city hot-shots, designers with big black cases, office workers on their lunch hour. Eight years in San Francisco, oh city of cities, has given me a sense of a city as a stream of energy. I'm in it and I'm of it. We're all making it happen, a little bit.

dash in doorways, or finger goods for a sense of texture. We buy, we carry our things away in bags with wonderful logos. We stop for lunch. We grab a bite, or sit leisurely, perhaps in a restaurant where we can overlook the water.

There's a romance in all this. This isn't just the general store or the water-hole, with each one of us bringing our buckets to fill. It's the notion that there is something out there—there is the stream of energy, and if we step out into the city, we step into the stream.

San Diego has a lot of people now. When I walk out—notice I said, walk, not drive—I want to see them. It's the scene in "A Thousand Clowns" where Jason Robards announces his preference for clean windows and a better class of garbage to his neighbors behind their blank windows. I want to share the weather with my neighbors, I want to see who is here, from Normal Heights and Logan Heights and Mission Hills, and from Tijuana and Japan and Chicago. I want to share the weather with my neighbors, not just on the beach or in the garden, but downtown—where we are doing something, making something happen.—Rosella Stern—

## DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE—THE MISSING LINK

Supposedly cities are for people, but what about San Diego? When we look at what is being built and projected downtown, one might begin to wonder. Most of the development appears to be commercial.

In addition to the commercial projects some condominiums have been built or are being planned. The pricetags of these preclude that people with moderate income could even consider them. Except for the high-rises, mostly occupied by seniors and handicapped people, no apartments have been built, and few, if any, appear to be in the offing. This is likely to result in the gentrification of the city, not a viable one where there is room for all segments of the population.

At a time when only a small percentage of persons is able to afford the purchase of housing, a genuine effort should be made to provide apartments for those less well-to-do. There is room for innovative design, because apartments don't need to be ugly. Some mixed-use buildings might add to the variety and provide a welcome change.

At present, there is not even a plan for a large foodmarket. If we fail to address these issues the city is likely to remain active during the day only. This would hardly fulfill the goal of the redevelopment. In addition, San Diego will have lost its chance to become a model of sensitive and imaginative planning.

—Hans Jovishoff—

Mr. Jovishoff would be interested in hearing your ideas about zoning and finance to make this possible. Call at 298-7005.



