

Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

**CASE NO.: CHC-2009-2840-HCM
ENV-2009-2859-CE**

HEARING DATE: September 17, 2009
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 321 S. Ocean Front Walk
Council District: 11
Community Plan Area: Venice
Area Planning Commission: West Los Angeles
Neighborhood Council: Venice
Legal Description: Lot 227, BLK 3 of Golden Bay Tract

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
VENICE WEST CAFE

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

APPLICANT: Charles Fisher and Alan Leib
140 S. Avenue 57
Los Angeles, CA 90026

OWNER: James Adelstein, Vice President
200 N. Laurel Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90048

RECOMMENDATION That the Cultural Heritage Commission:

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.10 because the application and accompanying photo documentation suggest the submittal may warrant further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP
Director of Planning

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Ken Bernstein, AICP, Manager
Office of Historic Resources

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: June, 2009 Historic-Cultural Monument Application
ZIMAS Report

SUMMARY

Constructed in 1922 and located on the Venice Boardwalk, this one-story commercial building exhibits character-defining features of Commercial Vernacular. Located at the intersection of Dudley Avenue and Ocean Front Walk, the flat-roofed subject building follows a rectangular plan with a slightly rounded corner. Eleven storefronts are located on the building's exterior, four facing the boardwalk and seven on Dudley Avenue. A small parapet at the top of the building is surmounted by a concrete cap. The building is sheathed primarily in rough brick with white glazed brick used to accentuate the roofline, storefronts, and window openings. Windows are glass, metal, and wood single and multi-pane fixed casement and clerestory windows. The entry features a recessed square porch with plate glass windows to the left side and a flat wooden offset to the right door.

The original builder or possible architect is unknown. In 1958, Stuart Perkoff, a poet, opened the Venice West Café at storefront #7 of the subject building to cater to the emerging Bohemian scene in Los Angeles, specifically in the Venice community. The "Beat Generation" in Venice evolved in response to disillusionment with the Korean War, particularly among veterans. There, they found an escape from established business and political norms and were free to write and recite poetry and explore the genre of jazz. In 1962, John Haag acquired ownership of the Venice West Café with the goal of maintaining it as a catalyst for Bohemian culture and his personal politics. After he began to advertise poetry readings at the Café, several plain clothes police officers attended one of his events and arrested him for supplying entertainment without a city permit. The case against Haag, a former Communist and a committed leftist, was eventually thrown out, though it effectively turned the café owner into a popular figure for the Beats. In 1965, the city passed an ordinance targeting the playing of drums on city beaches, despite Haag's efforts to mobilize the community in protest. The act was largely seen as an attempt to prevent the Beats from using their bongos in the area. After the owner of the building attempted to evict him from the space, Haag quietly closed the Café in 1966. He later became the co-founder of the Peace and Freedom party and was a candidate for state office for over two decades.

Between 1958 and 1966, the Venice West Café appears to have served as a local symbol of the growing countercultural movement of the 1950s-1960s. By featuring jazz, the owners ensured racial integration in the Café. Local artists displayed their work on the interior walls, and poets, such as Allen Ginsberg and Jim Morrison (future vocalist for The Doors), read their work to intimate audiences. Perkoff himself wrote the words "Art is Love is God" on the walls to indicate the type of setting he hoped to produce.

The Café's unadorned interior space appears to have not changed significantly since the business first opened in 1958. Though various alterations have been made to some of the subject building's commercial units, the Venice West Café space remains intact.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing

characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

FINDINGS

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Commission determines that the application is complete and that the property may be significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

TYPE OR PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

IDENTIFICATION

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT VENICE WEST CAFE
2. STREET ADDRESS 7 E. DUDLEY (CAFÉ SPACE) AND 321 S. OCEAN FRONT WALK (BUILDING)
CITY VENICE ZIP CODE 90291 COUNCIL DISTRICT 11
ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 4286-030-012
3. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT GOLDEN BAY TRACT, AS PER MAP FILED IN BOOK 2, PAGE 15 OF MAPS,
IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
BLOCK 3 LOT(S) 227 ARB. NO. N/A
RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY 321 THRU 325 S. OCEAN FRONT WALK AND 1 THRU 11 E DUDLEY AVENUE
4. PRESENT OWNER NORTHWESTERN ENGINEERING COMPANY (CONTACT JAMES ADELSTEIN, VICE PRESIDENT)
STREET ADDRESS P. O. BOX 2624 (LOCAL: 200 N. LAUREL AVENUE, LOS ANGELES, CA 90048)
CITY RAPID CITY STATE SD ZIP CODE 57709 PHONE (323)930-9700 AND (605) 394-3310
OWNER IS: PRIVATE PUBLIC
5. PRESENT USE STORES AND RESTAURANTS ORIGINAL USE STORES AND RESTAURANTS

DESCRIPTION

6. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR
7. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET)
SEE DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT VENICE WEST CAFE

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: FACTUAL 1922 ESTIMATED _____

11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER: UNKNOWN

13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS MARCH 12, 2009

14. CONDITION: EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR DETERIORATED NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

A. ALTERATIONS: VARIOUS ALTERATIONS TO BUILDING FAÇADE, INCLUDING A PARAPET ADJUSTMENT IN 1955 THE FILLING IN OF SOME WINDOWS TO CORNER UNIT IN 1966. NUMEROUS INTERIOR CHANGES. THE VENICE WEST CAFÉ SPACE REMAINS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME, INCLUDING THE FAÇADE, AS IT WAS HISTORICALLY.

15. THREATS TO SITE NONE KNOWN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT VANDALISM PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT

16. IS THE STRUCTURE ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE MOVED UNKNOWN

SIGNIFICANCE

17. BRIEFLY STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE; INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSONS ASSOCIATED WITH SITE (SEE OPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WORKSHEET)

FROM 1958 TO 1966, THE VENICE WEST CAFÉ (LOCATED AT 7 E. DUDLEY) FUNCTIONED AS A CENTRAL GATHERING PLACE FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S BOHEMIAN CITIZENS AND IS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING BUILDINGS PATRONIZED BY THE BEAT CULTURE AT VENICE BEACH DURING THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY. VENICE BEACH ROSE TO PROMINENCE AS A HOME FOR CREATIVE INTELLECTUALS, POETS, MUSICIANS, AND ARTISTS. STUART Z. PERKOFF (1930-1974), A BEAT POET AND COUNTERCULTURE LEADER, OPENED THE VENICE WEST CAFÉ TO WELCOME THESE UNDERGROUND ARTISTS AND PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE "FORMATION OF A COMMUNITY OF DISAFFILIATES" (AS DETAILED IN LAWRENCE LIPTON'S 1959 BOOK "THE HOLY BARBARIANS") WHO BEGAN "A DEEP-GOING CHANGE, A REVOLUTION" IN U.S. CULTURE. JOHN HAAG, CO-FOUNDER OF THE PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY, ACQUIRED THE CAFÉ IN 1962 AND RAN IT WITH HIS WIFE ANNA THROUGH MID-1966.

SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) LOS ANGELES BUILDING PERMITS PER ATTACHED, BOOKS, SUCH AS "VENICE WEST", BY JOHN ARTHUR MAYNARD AND "THE HOLY BARBARIANS" BY LAWRENCE LIPTON, LOS ANGELES COUNTY ASSESSOR'S RECORDS, RECORDED DEEDS AND STUART PERKOFF PAPERS AT UCLA

18. DATE FORM PREPARED APR. 22, 2009 PREPARER'S NAME CHARLES J. FISHER FOR ALLEN LEIB

19. ORGANIZATION _____ STREET ADDRESS 140 S. AVENUE 57

CITY HIGHLAND PARK STATE CA ZIP CODE 90042 PHONE (323) 256-3593 & (818) 500-8521

E-MAIL ADDRESS: ARROYOSECO@HOTMAIL.COM (FISHER) & ALLEIB@EARTHLINK.NET (LEIB)

DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET

TYPE OR PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

THE VENICE WEST CAFE IS A 1 1/2 STORY,
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT NUMBER OF STORIES

COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR, RECTANGULAR PLAN COMMERCIAL BUILDING
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8 ABOVE) PLAN SHAPE (SEE CHART) STRUCTURE USE (RESIDENCE, ETC)

WITH A BRICK FINISH AND WOOD TRIM.
MATERIAL (WOOD SIDING, WOOD SHINGLES, BRICK, STUCCO, ETC) MATERIAL (WOOD, METAL, ETC.)

ITS FLAT ROOF IS COVERED WITH ROLLED COMPOSITION. GLASS, METAL AND WOOD,
ROOF SHAPE (SEE CHART)) MATERIAL (CLAY TILE, ASPHALT OR WOOD SHINGLES) WINDOW MATERIAL

SINGLE AND MULTI PANE FIXED, CASEMENT AND CLERESTORY WINDOWS ARE PART OF THE DESIGN.
WINDOW TYPE [DOUBLE HUNG (SLIDES UP & DOWN), CASEMENT (OPENS OUT), HORIZONTAL SLIDING, ETC]

THE ENTRY FEATURES A RECESSED SQUARE PORCH WITH PLATE GLASS WINDOWS TO THE LEFT SIDE
DOOR LOCATION (RECESSED, CENTERED, OFF-CENTER, CORNER, ETC.)

WITH A FLAT WOODEN OFFSET TO THE RIGHT DOOR. ADDITIONAL CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS
ENTRY DOOR STYLE (SEE CHART)

OF THE STRUCTURE ARE A SMALL PARAPET AT THE TOP OF THE BUILDING, SURMOUNTED BY A CONCRETE
IDENTIFY ORIGINAL FEATURES SUCH AS PORCHES (SEE CHART); BALCONIES; NUMBER AND SHAPE OF DORMERS (SEE CHART);

CAP. DECORATIVE DESIGN ELEMENTS IN GLAZED BRICK, WHICH ORIGINALLY CULMINATED AT THE TOP OF THE PARAPET
NUMBER AND LOCATION OF CHIMNEYS; SHUTTERS; SECONDARY FINISH MATERIALS; PARAPETS; METAL TRIM; DECORATIVE TILE OR CAST STONE; ARCHES;

ARE VISIBLE BELOW THE CONCRETE BAND. WINDOWS AND DOORS ARE SURROUNDED BY THE SAME GLAZED BRICK.
ORNAMENTAL WOODWORK; SYMMETRY OR ASYMMETRY; CORNICES; FRIEZES; TOWERS OR TURRETS; BAY WINDOWS; HALFTIMBERING; HORIZONTALITY;

THE BUILDING HAS A ROUNDED CORNER AT THE SOUTHWEST UNDER WHICH IS THE ENTRANCE TO ONE OF 5 BUSINESS
VERTICALITY; FORMALITY OR INFORMALITY; GARDEN WALLS, ETC.

STOREFRONTS, EACH OF WHICH ARE SURMOUNTED BY A MULTI LIGHT TRANSOM STYLE CLERESTORY WINDOW. THE WINDOWS AND
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

CLERESTORIES FOR THE CORNER STORE FRONT HAVE BEEN MOSTLY FILLED IN AND COVERED WITH STUCCO. THE STUCCO HAS
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

BEEN COVERED WITH MURALS. THE VENICE WEST STOREFRONT AT 7 E. DUDLEY AVENUE HAS TWO SQUARE PLATE
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

GLASS WINDOWS OVER BRICK BULKHEADS. THESE BULKHEADS ARE BELOW THE OTHER WINDOWS OF THE BUILDING,
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

BUT IN VARIOUS ALTERED STATES. A SMALL CONCRETE STEP IS UNDER THE DOOR OF THE 7 DUDLEY STOREFRONT
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

SECONDARY BUILDINGS CONSIST OF THERE ARE NO SECONDARY BUILDINGS ON THE SITE.
IDENTIFY GARAGE; GARDEN SHELTER, ETC.

SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES INCLUDE A AN UNEMBELLISHED INTERIOR SPACE THAT HOUSED THE CAFÉ, MUCH
IDENTIFY ORIGINAL FEATURES SUCH AS WOOD PANELING; MOLDINGS AND TRIM, SPECIAL GLASS WINDOWS,

AS IT WAS WHEN THE BUSINESS FIRST OPENED IN 1958. THE OTHER SPACES HAVE BEEN REMODELED NUMEROUS
ORNATE CEILINGS; PLASTER MOLDINGS; LIGHT FIXTURES; PAINTED DECORATION; CERAMIC TILE; STAIR BALUSTRADES; BUILT-IN FURNITURE, ETC.

TIMES AND LITTLE OR NONE OF THE ORIGINAL INTERIOR DESIGN REMAINS.
IDENTIFY NOTABLE MATURE TREES AND SHRUBS

IDENTIFY NOTABLE MATURE TREES AND SHRUBS

IDENTIFY NOTABLE MATURE TREES AND SHRUBS

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

Complete One or Both of the Upper and Lower Portions of This Page

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE VENICE WEST CAFE IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT

COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8)

ARCHITECTURE

AND MEETS THE CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE BECAUSE OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF ITS DESIGN AND THE RETENTION OF ITS ORIGINAL FORM, DETAILING AND INTEGRITY.

AND/OR

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE VENICE WEST CAFE BUILDING WAS BUILT IN 1922 AND THE CAFÉ OPENED IN 1958

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT

YEAR BUILT

STUART PERKOFF AND JOHN HAAG

NAME OF FIRST OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT OWNER

WAS IMPORTANT TO THE

DEVELOPMENT OF LOS ANGELES BECAUSE BOTH MEN WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN PROMOTING THE ARTISTIC PART OF THE
LOS ANGELES COUNTERCULTURE SCENE DURING THE MID 20TH CENTURY. THE "BEAT GENERATION" BEGAN IN VENICE
AMONG DISENCHANTED KOREAN WAR VETERANS MUCH IN THE SAME WAY AS THE "LOST GENERATION" OF ERNEST
HEMINGWAY AND F. SCOTT FITZGERALD FORMED IN PARIS AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR 40 YEARS EARLIER. THE
BEATS WERE ARTISTS WHO SHIED AWAY FROM BOTH ESTABLISHED BUSINESS NORMS AND POLITICS IN GENERAL. "THE
HOLY BARBARIANS", AS LAWRENCE LIPTON REFERS TO THE MOVEMENT IN HIS BOOK OF THE SAME NAME, CAME TO
VENICE TO FIND A PEACE THAT THEY FELT ESCAPED THEM ELSEWHERE AND BEGAN TO WRITE AND RECITE POETRY AND
ADOPT PURE JAZZ AS THEIR NEW MUSICAL ANTHEM. AS THE MOVEMENT QUIETLY GREW, THOSE ON THE OUTSIDE SAW
THE REBELLION AS THREATENING THEIR WAY OF LIFE. THUS BEGAN A CAMPAIGN TO CLOSE DOWN PLACES SUCH AS ERIC
NORD'S GAS HOUSE AND STUART PERKOFF'S VENICE WEST CAFÉ. PERKOFF WAS A POET WHO ESTABLISHED THE
CAFÉ IN 1958 AS A PLACE TO RELAX, DRINK SOME JAVA AND READ OR LISTEN TO POETRY AND JAZZ. AS THE PRESSURE
BEGAN TO MOUNT IN THE EARLY SIXTIES, THE GAS HOUSE WAS SHUTTERED IN 1960 AND AFTER A BRIEF PERIOD AS A
LEARNING CENTER, WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1962 AS A PART OF VENICE REDEVELOPMENT. IN 1960 THE BELEAGUERED
PERKOFF TURNED THE BUSINESS OVER TO JOHN KENEVIAN AND ROCCO BRESCISE WHO KEPT IT ALIVE UNTIL IT WAS
ACQUIRED BY JOHN AND ANNA HAAG IN 1962. JOHN R. HAAG WAS NO STRANGER TO POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET
CONTINUED

TWO YEARS AFTER BUYING THE CAFÉ, HIS GOAL WAS FOR THE CAFÉ TO REMAIN A CATALYST FOR BOHEMIAN CULTURE THAT HAD LONG BEEN A FIXTURE IN VENICE AND TO PROMOTE HIS OWN POLITICAL IDEALS AS A PART OF IT. HAAG BEGAN HIS CRUSADE BY ADVERTISING POETRY READINGS AT THE CAFÉ. SEVERAL PLAIN CLOTHES POLICE OFFICERS ATTENDED A READING IN SEPTEMBER AND ARRESTED HAAG FOR SUPPLYING ENTERTAINMENT WITHOUT A PERMIT FROM THE CITY. HAAG IMMEDIATELY CRIED FOUL AND NOTED THE CITY HAD ALLOWED THE POETRY READINGS FOR SIX YEARS BEFORE ARRESTING HIM. IT WAS PURELY POLITICAL AND HAAG, A FORMER COMMUNIST AND STILL A CONFIRMED LEFTIST SOON BECAME A WELL PREPARED MARTYR. THE CASE WAS WEAK AND WAS THROWN OUT. A NEW MOVE BY THE CITY WENT AFTER THE DRUMS BEING POUNDED ON THE BEACH IN VENICE, ESPECIALLY THE BONGOS USED BY THE BEATS. HAAG ORGANIZED MASSIVE PROTESTS AGAINST THE ORDINANCE WHICH WAS PASSED ON JULY 2, 1965 WITH ONLY FUTURE MAYOR TOM BRADLEY A RETIRED LAPD OFFICER AND COUNCILMAN ERNARDI BERNARDI, A FORMER BIG BAND MUSICIAN, OPPOSING IT. BOTH MEN BELIEVED THAT THE SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF THE BAN WOULD PROVE TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL. ALTHOUGH HAAG WON HIS POLITICAL BATTLES, HE SOON HAD TO DEAL WITH AN ATTEMPT BY THE BUILDING OWNER, EDWARD R. GENERO, TO EVICT HIM. BEFORE ACQUIRING THE CAFÉ, HAAG HAD RUN AN ART GALLERY NEXT DOOR, AT 5 E. DUDLEY AVENUE. HE HAD RETAINED THAT SPACE AND HAD ANTAGONIZED THE LOCAL CONSERVATIVE COMMUNITY BY SUBLETTING IT TO THE LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE W. E. B. DU BOIS CLUB. THE HAAGS WERE ABLE TO FIGHT OFF THE EVICTION AS WELL, BUT NOW DRAINED THEY QUIETLY CLOSED THE CAFÉ IN MID 1966. HAAG WAS TO CO-FOUND THE PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY TWO YEARS LATER AND WAS A CANDIDATE FOR THE PARTY FOR OVER TWO DECADES, FINALLY PASSING AWAY IN 2006 AT THE AGE OF 75. THE VENICE WEST CAFÉ WAS A CATALYST FOR MANY OF THE MOVEMENTS THAT WOULD SOON FOLLOW, SUCH AS THE ANTI WAR PROTEST OVER VIETNAM THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF AMERICAN POLITICS. THROUGH JAZZ, THE CAFÉ WAS FULLY INTEGRATED FROM THE BEGINNING. IT NOT ONLY GAVE A PLACE FOR MUSICIANS, BUT ALSO BECAME A SOUNDING BOARD FOR POETS, SUCH AS ALLEN GINSBERG AND A YOUNG JIM MORRISON WHO BECAME WORLD FAMOUS DURING HIS SHORT LIFE AS THE VOCALIST FOR THE DOORS. MANY ARTISTS ALSO DISPLAYED THEIR WORK ON THE WALLS OF THE TINY CAFÉ, WHERE STUART PERKOFF HAD SCRAWLED THE WORDS "ART IS LOVE IS GOD". THE VENICE WEST CAFÉ BECAME SYMBOLIC OF A MOVEMENT THAT WAS TO TAKE ON THE WORLD, FROM VENICE TO HAIGHT-ASHBURY TO WOODSTOCK. MORE RECENTLY THE CAFÉ LOCATION SERVED AS THE SPONTO GALLERY, WHICH STROVE TO CHRONICLE AND PAY HOMAGE TO THE BEAT GENERATION OF VENICE. THE GALLERY CLOSED SOON AFTER MARK "SPONTO" KORNFELD PASSED AWAY ON DECEMBER 28, 2008. DURING THE 1940s THE BUILDING HOUSED "THE BREAKERS". THE BUILDING IS ADJACENT TO THE "CADILLAC HOTEL", ANOTHER HISTORIC VENICE VENUE.

A BEATNIK ASKS: 'WHY ALL THE FUSS?'

BOB FRAMPTON

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Sep 27, 1959; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - pg. W51

A BEATNIK ASKS: 'WHY ALL THE FUSS?'

When beatniks applied for an entertainment license for the Gas House in Venice it led to a series of sometimes stormy hearings before a Police Commission examiner that ended when the beatnik representatives walked out charging prejudice. New hearings will be asked. Following is the story of an evening in the Venice West coffee house and the controversial Gas House.

BY BOB FRAMPTON

VENICE—"A big part of it is wanting the right to be let alone as long as you're not hurting somebody else," the bearded beatnik across the table said. "I can't see what all the fuss is about."

We were at Venice West (cafe espresso 25 cents a cup) a mile or so down the strand from the Gas House, which is the heart of an artistic renaissance or a hangout for art beach bums, depending on how you look at it.

Len Nadeau, late 30ish, ex-editor for Jimmy Hoffa papers up north and friendly, paused as a "reader" lighted three candles

on a rickety stand and opened his thick book of poetry, "Christ Was a Colored Man."

"Everybody knows loneliness," poet William Millet began, then called for attention to quiet a lively argument at a back table about the need for self-expression.

... a tumble of words about a train in the night. In the dingy, badly lighted coffee house with 30 or so young people listening, a couple making sketches of Millet, others toying with chess pieces and some nervously waiting for silence so they could make their next point, the words sounded dramatic.

The words weren't new, though. My wife Mary and I had heard them in our apartment a couple of years ago when Millet talked about quitting Lockheed to live the free life.

Mary and I were looking at a more than two years older and much more tired Millet at this accidental meeting in our first visit to a beatnik coffee house.

The reading over, Millet filled in the two

years for us. I'll tell you about it—because possibly it helps answer what the Gas House and the beatnik business is all about.

Millet, then 32, walked away from a 9 to 5 job, an attractive wife and two children and went looking for the words and feelings that would make him believe his life meant something.

The search led to Europe. A bitter experience:

"The people and the art movement are tired and provincial... in Sweden there are new thoughts but there is crudeness and little artistic effort... Londoners were at least tolerant and friendly but Paris is narrow and suspicious... The Left Bank is an artistic joke.

"Even Greenwich Village is decayed with tourists sitting around admiring old art fakers who claim they did fine work 20 years ago. I read in the Village coffee houses and

Please Turn to Pg. 3, Col. 2

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Beatnik Asks: 'Why All the Fuss?' Pleads for Right to Be Let Alone

Continued from First Page

got digusted. There is much more here in Venice."

That brought Nadeau back into it.

Too Many Rules

"We've got the beginnings for an American art renaissance here and being let alone to work without a lot of unnecessary rules somebody else made is a big part of it. Beatniks have rules, of course. We don't allow violence, but we have a group of pretty solid boys who can handle any wise hoodlums who try to give us a hard time.

"Other people can be drunks, drug addicts, or whatever they like but we don't want them in the Gas House because they hurt the group," said Nadeau.

Artist, Alley Fighter

I had the feeling I was talking to a dedicated man who was made up of artist, anthropologist and alley fighter.

Smiling and scratching his beard he summed it up:

"Anyhow, I don't see why everybody has to be a conformist."

"Ha!" snapped the beardless poet Millett. "Some of you guys are the worst conformists of all. You all talk that beatnik talk (Nadeau doesn't) and wear those beards. You've got a lot of rules. They're just different."

What Are Words?

This went on for awhile, and somebody made the point that whenever a group agrees on the meaning of a word, no matter what it is or how it sounds, it's communication . . . and that's what words are for, aren't they?

A couple of hours and thousands of words (by candlelight) later we were walking along the strand to visit the Gas House, which Millett described as well named."

I asked Nadeau if all the young people who call themselves beatniks these days are taking part in the art renaissance.

That brought a snort.

"No. There are possibly 4,000 self-styled beatniks in this area, but a lot of them are just kids who don't do much more than grow beards . . . and don't do very well at that." He paused to stroke his own magnificent growth.

"I guess there are about 100 beatniks here who are actually working . . . painting, writing, working in clay and other art media.

"It's like a beehive. There are the workers and the drones. We've got lots of drones."

We entered the hive.

No bees ever had it so big, drafty and colorful.

Gas House Arty

Large expressionistic paintings made up one wall, more paintings, sculpture and work benches along another, a sort of do-it-yourself kitchen dominated by can openers, and a balcony where the beatniks used to have their pads (they moved to a hotel).

In a place of honor near the entrance was a gay, painted bath tub and the work area where beatniks were making good their offer to paint garbage cans for all comers.

This was the Gas House and its art works.

"Some of it's good and some of it's lousy," Nadeau said. "But it's sure not hurting anybody as I see it."

That's how I saw it, too.

But I couldn't help wondering what would happen when the rains came.

The beatniks may be working in their drafty hive in December as they did in May, but I'll bet there'll be a lot less of them.

Beats Have in Mind a 'Save the Cafe' Parley

Bewhiskered Venetians Plan Battle to Keep Gloomy Garden of Sorrows Blooming

BY C. A. MORTENSON

VENICE—The Beatniks are going to hold a business meeting here, and that's no jazz.

Discussion will center around the future of the Venice West Cafe, 7 Dudley Ave.

The Venice West is not just another coffee house. Proprietors John Kenevan and Rocco Brescise say it is the last redoubt of the unregenerate Beat; a gloomy Garden of Sorrows where true Beats can still foregather and in the communion of kindred spirits steel themselves in the conviction that work is for the birds.

But the long shadow of the law has loomed across the crumbling facade of the Venice West in recent weeks, and it is just this menace that the Beat brothers want to discuss in their meeting.

'Terror Tactics'?

Kenevan and Brescise claim they discern "terror tactics" in the police practice of invading the coffee house and demanding that patrons exhibit ID cards.

"Sure, some of our patrons have police records," says Brescise, "but we live in peace here. Nobody is beefed up."

He admits, however, that there is some substance in the claim of police vice officers that the cafe has been the scene of several "narcotics incidents" in the past.

"Some pillheads used the coffee house as a place to meet their pushers," Brescise says, "but we put a stop to that — bad for business, you know."

Eviction Drive Seen

More insidious than the close police supervision, in the Beats' view, is what they call a campaign to evict them from their rundown haven by the sea.

They claim police officers and members of various community organizations have been exerting pressure to have the Beats ousted.

This campaign has been waged so successfully, Brescise believes, that he expects an eviction notice to be served any day.

"But we've got our backs against the wall, and we will fight," Brescise vows.

It is noteworthy that the Beats are fighting with their

backs against walls freshly painted to obliterate various penciled inscriptions which some people might find offensive.

And the candles illuminating the Venice West are snuffed out at 3 a.m. these days instead of flickering on 'til dawn.

But a fresh coat of paint is not necessarily a whitewash, the Beats here maintain.

They are inclined to snicker behind their chin foliage at the Beats elsewhere along the Ocean Front who have yielded to the pressures of society and, if you will pardon the expression, conformed.

'Terrible Repudiation'

It is a terrible repudiation of philosophy which has overtaken Beats everywhere leaving only the habitués of the Venice West as honest spokesmen for the avant-garde, Brescise maintains.

Even Jacques Kerouac has joined the Philistines, in Brescise's opinion.

"Only Norman Mailer knows how school should be kept in Beatdom."

Things are in such bad shape that some Beats have even taken jobs.

This is a prospect really disturbing to dedicated Beats like Worth Belgard, a familiar figure around the Venice West.

Paralysis of the Mind?

"Where do I live?" he draws. "Why man, I live here (in the coffee house) and I live on the beach if I have to and I do anything I have to do to keep from going to work."

"The thing I don't dig at all is going to work. It paralyzes the mind."

If the situation doesn't improve fast, the Beats are talking about a march on City Hall to protest their lot in life.

The meeting to discuss the fate of the coffee house and the protest march might be held tonight, perhaps Friday night—whenever the Beat can get around to it.

Other 109 -- No Title

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Apr 8, 1962; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)
pg. N16



TODAY

BENNO RUBINYI, pianist, Musician's Auditorium, 817 N Vine St., 2:30. Warsaw Concerto (Addinsell); "Clair de Lune" (Debussy); "Lotus Land" (Scott); Cornish Rhapsody (Bath); "Spellbound" Concerto (Rozsa); "The Blue Danube" Waltz (Schutz-Evler).

AMATI STRING QUARTET. Los Angeles County Museum, 3. Free. Quartet, Opus 18, No. 6 (Beethoven); Quartet, Opus 41, No. 3 (Schumann).

Music

UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS CONCERT BAND, James R. Jorgenson conducting; Patricia McNay, soprano; Larry Ashurst, trumpeter. Memorial Chapel, University of Redlands, 3. Free. Three Chorale Preludes (Latham); "Praise Be to Thee" (Handel); Musetta's Waltz, from "La Boheme" (Puccini); Overture (Mehul); Andante et Scherzo (Barat); March Electric (Creatore); "Chester" Overture (Schumann); Miniatures (Turina); "Chimes of Liberty" (Goldman); Dance Toccata (Agay); excerpts from "The Unsinkable Molly Brown" (Williamson); "The Sinfonians" (Williams).

SHIRLEY BROOKS, soprano; Renee

Golabek, pianist (Musicians in the Making). Valley Cities Jewish Community Center, 13164 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys, 3.

COLEMAN CHAMBER MUSIC AUDITION WINNERS. Pasadena Playhouse, 3:30. Free. Movements from Tria by Beethoven, Brahms; Suite (Reynolds); Concerto, A Minor (Scarlati); String Trio (Rivier); Quartet, E Minor (Smetana).

SOUTHWEST YOUTH SYMPHONY CONCERT, Robert F. Williams conducting; Morningside High School

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Music

Continued From Page 10

Chorus, Don G. Fonata, conducting. Sportsman's County Park, 98th and Western, 7:30. Free.

EUGENE LIST, pianist. Chapman College Auditorium, Orange, 8.

LOS ANGELES BRASS SOCIETY, Lester Remsen conducting; Dorothy Remsen, harpist. Whittier High School Auditorium, 8:15.

LAKEWOOD PHILHARMONIC ASSN. Milikan High School Auditorium, 8:15. Also Friday and Saturday, 8:15, "The Mikado" (Gilbert and Sullivan).

NEO-RENAISSANCE GROUP, Michael Agnello conducting. Venice West Cafe, 5 Dudley Ave., Venice, 8:30.

MONDAY

IMMACULATE HEART COLLEGE COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA, Sister Mary Nicholas, I.H.M., conducting; Arlene Weehl, Susan Amateau, pianists; Eileen Duffy, soprano; Vincent Cesta, accordionist. Immaculate Heart College Auditorium, 2021 N Western Ave., 8:30. Free.

RONALD TARR, pianist; Shirley Marcus, violinist; George Szende, violist; Frederick Miller, Alberta Hurst, cellists. Hancock Auditorium, USC, 8:30. Free.

TUESDAY

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, Paul Kletzki conducting; John Browning, pianist. Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 8:30. Overture to "Oberon" (Weber); Piano Concerto No. 4 (Beethoven); Symphony No. 4, E Minor (Brahms).

UCLA MADRIGAL SINGERS, Raymond Maxemen conducting. Schoenberg Hall, UCLA, 12 noon. Free.

ADAM MEKLER, pianist. Fine Arts Building, L.A. City College, noon.

UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS STUDENTS. Watchern Auditorium, Redlands, 4. "L'Enfant Prodigue" (Debussy).

USC CHAMBER SINGERS, Charles C. Hirt conducting; USC Concert Choir, James Veil conducting. Bovard Auditorium, USC, 8:30.

WEDNESDAY

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, Paul Kletzki conducting; Marie Gibson, soprano. Thorne Hall, Occidental College, 8:30. Symphony No. 4, E Minor (Brahms); "Knoxville: Summer 1915" (Barber); suite from "The Firebird" (Stravinsky).

CHARLES SECREASE, pianist. Hancock Auditorium, USC, 12:15. Free.

MARILYN HORNE, soprano. (Redlands Winter Concert Series. Admission by membership only.) Memorial Chapel, University of Redlands, 8:15. "Here Amid the Shady Woods," "Finche un zeffiro scava," "Alleluja" (Handel); five songs (Wolf); "Una voce poco fa," from "The Barber of Seville" (Rossini); four songs (Hindemith); four Spanish Carols (Nin).

ROGER WAGNER CHORALE; Max Helfman, composer-conductor; Salli Terri, soprano; Martin Blake, tenor. University of Judaism, 6525 Sunset Blvd., 8:15. "The Sacred Bridge."

WILLIAM HALL CHORALE. Wilshire Ebell Theater, 8:30.

THURSDAY

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC OR-

CHESTRA, Paul Kletzki conducting. Chaffee Union High School Auditorium, Ontario, 8:30. Symphony No. 4 (Brahms); "The Afternoon of a Faun" (Debussy); suite from "The Firebird" (Stravinsky).

THE WEAVERS: Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 8:30. Folk songs of United States, England, Scotland, Israel, Spain, Chile and South Africa.

DAVID PINTO, pianist. Glendale YWCA Auditorium, 8:30. Free.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STATE COLLEGE MUSIC AND DRAMA STUDENTS. Little Theater, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, 8:30. Also Friday and Saturday. "R.S.V.P." (Offenbach); "The Poor Sailor" (Milhaud).

FRIDAY

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, Paul Kletzki conducting. Whittier High School Auditorium, 8:30. Repetition of Thursday program.

"THE MIKADO IN JAZZ" (Los Angeles Bureau of Music) with Jester Hairston, Hollywood Lyric Chorale, Virginia Rose Ballet, G. Malcolm Groher conducting. Hollywood High School 8:15. Also Saturday. Free.

CALIFORNIA JUNIOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Peter Meremblum, Louis Polange conducting; Leonard Slatkin, pianist; Madeline Schatz, violinist. Mira Costa High School Auditorium, Manhattan Beach, 8:15.

HIGHLAND PARK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Leo Arnaud conducting; Elise Tashjian, soprano; Victor Hirst, tenor. Franklin High School Auditorium, 820 N Ave. 54, 8:15. Free.

THE WEAVERS. Pasadena Civic Auditorium, 8:30. Repetition of Thursday program.

ERROLL GARNER, pianist. Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 8:30. Improvisations, jazz, semi-classics.

DEBUT ORCHESTRA, Henry Lewis conducting; Ella Lee, soprano; Toni Robinson, harpist; David Shostac, flutist (Young Musicians Foundation). Hancock Auditorium, USC, 8:30.

"A MUSICAL CANVAS": Joyce Osborn, violinist; Delores Lease, cellist; Milton Stern, pianist; Thomas Osborn, clarinetist, recorder player. Troupers Auditorium, 1625 N La Brea Ave., 8:30.

UCLA OPERA WORKSHOP, Jan Popper conducting. Schoenberg Hall, UCLA, 8:30. Also Saturday. "The Mask Maker" (Shimizu).

SATURDAY

BURBANK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Constantin Ecksteinoff conducting; Burbank Choral Club, Louis P. Nash conducting. John Burroughs High School Auditorium, 1920 Clark Ave., Burbank, 8:15. Free.

PAGANINI QUARTET (San Gabriel Valley Philharmonic Artists Assn.) Mission Playhouse, San Gabriel, 8:30.

GLORIA NEWMAN DANCE CO. Orange Coast College Auditorium, 2701 Fairview Rd., Costa Mesa, 8:30.

SANTA MONICA CIVIC BALLET, Andrei Tremaine directing; Andrea Karlson, Paul Maure. Barnum Hall, Santa Monica High School, 8:30. "Giselle" (Adam).

ERROLL GARNER, pianist. Foeddena Civic Auditorium, 8:30. Improvisations, jazz, semi-classics.

Artist to Flee Before Ambitions of Venice

VENICE—Earl Newman moved here one and a half years ago to escape what he called the "rat race" of modern society.

But society, in the form of strictly enforced building codes, is forcing him out of his ocean-front art studio.

Newman's low-ceiling, wood-frame house is just around the corner from the Venice West Cafe, once the cultural center of the Bohemian community that inhabited Venice.

Beatniks Move

But in the last few years most of the beatniks and their youthful imitators have moved out and New-

man's neighbors now are mostly elderly Jewish people who play pinocle in the afternoon on picnic tables along the beach.

The studio at 317 Ocean Front Walk along with several other buildings in the neighborhood will be demolished soon in compliance with a more stringent application of the city building codes.

Newman, a slender, bearded Harvard graduate, already has a place to move his paintings, his poster silk screen press, his woodcuts, his wife and his three children.

But he laments having to leave Venice.
 "There's an emphasis here on people that you don't find in tract homes," he said.

showed a Democratic key and a Republican phant both adrift in the gondola of a gas balloon.

He said, "I think coming to the beach and having low rent has given me an opportunity to be an individual."

He said he filled out a form when he left Harvard describing his goals for 10 years in the future and complained that all of the questionnaire was geared with money as a standard.

Newman said his goals were the lowest in the class, financially.

He recalled a La Cienega gallery owner who once advised him, "You ought to paint more of those land-

scapes, especially the orange and green ones. They sell better."

Newman says he hasn't painted an orange and green landscape since then.



PLANS MOVE—Artist Earl Newman, right, plans to move from Venice studio because of city's bustling source-up drive. Here he examines one of his silk screen works, a print of a 1964 calendar, with his assistant Larry Merlín. Times photo



PROPRIETOR—John Haag, owner of Venice West coffee house, says he is not a beatnik but a bohemian, and as such is interested in civic affairs. Poetry, politics and art still have their hearings at Venice West, just the same.
Times photo

Business Droops, but Venice West Goes On

By Doug Mauldin
VENICE—Most Beatniks have packed their bongos and left here, but their sanctum, the Venice West Cafe, lingers on. And so does a small but faithful group of customers who barely support the controversial coffee house at 7 Dudley Ave. But it's a far cry from the boom days of the Beat philosophy, when tourists waited in line "to see the circus" at Venice West.

Only a handful of customers come now to sip American and Italian coffee and discuss politics and art and play chess and hear an occasional poetry reading. "A few years ago the cafe had 10 times as many customers as we usually have now," says John Haag, who has owned the coffee house for the past 14 months.

Expenses Met

"But we're meeting expenses—just barely. I'm not interested in making a lot of money, just enough to keep the place going." Haag, a 32-year-old former technical writer with Spure Technology Laboratory, said he doesn't know how long he and his Italian-born wife, Anna, will keep the cafe operating.

"We suspect that we will

have to close eventually," he said. "Even our faithful customers are being driven from the area by rising rents. It's something that we will regret, however, because we feel the coffee house is providing a real community service. It's a place where people can express themselves freely, with no social pressures forcing them to think in a certain way."

Artists Visit

Venice West habitues are generally artists, writers and students of modest means. A few professional people—a dentist, some lawyers and engineers — also stop in to talk about things they can't normally talk about, says Haag.

Haag, who first was attracted to Venice West as a customer, scorns the appellation "Beatnik."

"The so-called Beatniks disassociated themselves from society. Bohemians, which we consider ourselves to be, traditionally have been interested in society. We're very active in civic affairs."

During the Beatnik craze a few years ago, tourists from all over the United States came to Venice West—often considered the seat of the Beat movement in the Southland. Other visitors were the imitation Beats and hecklers.

"They came to see the circus and heckle the performers," Haag said.

Venice civic groups tried unsuccessfully a couple of years ago to get Venice West evicted from its narrow quarters, which once served as a retail store. Local residents complained that the coffee house was a

gathering place for undesirable characters.

But proprietors John Keanevan and Rocco Brescise withstood civic pressure and police "harrassment" and refused to close down, it was reported.

Haag said police continue to harrass the cafe.

"They frequently park in front of the place and just watch us," Haag said.

Venice West is open from dusk to dawn seven days a week serving American coffee for 25 cents, expreso for 50 cents and capuccino for 75 cents.

Haag considers the few remaining coffee houses in high-rent districts to be less than true coffee houses.

"They're strictly commercial . . . out to make money. We're strictly a non-profit enterprise — whether we want it that way or not."

Artist Exhibits

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Nov 12, 1964; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)
pg. WS_A9

Artist Exhibits

VENICE--Afranio Metelli, an Italian artist, is exhibiting his paintings evenings and Sunday afternoons at the Venico West Cafe, 7 Dudley Ave.

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Arrest Won't Prevent Poetry at Coffee House

Lawyer Advises Proprietor That Police Action Is Illegal; Readings Will Continue

VENICE—A coffee house will continue poetry readings despite the recent arrest of its proprietor for doing so, says John R. Haag, the proprietor.

Haag, arrested early last month for permitting poetry readings in the Venice West Cafe, 7 Dudley Ave., gave a previously announced reading last Sunday and was not arrested.

He said his attorney, Herbert M. Porter, told him the city had illegally arrested him on the grounds that he was providing entertainment without a police permit. Haag faces a jury trial Nov. 18 in West Los Angeles Municipal Court on the charge:

"We intend to continue our readings, as before," said

Haag. "A police patrol car stopped briefly in front of the cafe while we were giving readings, but the officers didn't leave the car."

Haag claims his arrest is a continuation of police "harassment" the cafe allegedly has been subjected to for several years. He said his arrest came two days after he posted a notice of plans to demonstrate against alleged police malpractices by the Ad Hoc Committee to End Police Malpractices.

Haag is chairman of the committee's West Side organization.

Coffee House Owner to Fight Police Charge

Faces Trial for Providing 'Unlicensed Entertainment' (Poetry Reading) in Venice

VENICE—John R. Haag, proprietor of a local coffee house, faces trial Nov. 18 in West Los Angeles Municipal Court on a charge of providing entertainment without a police permit. Haag is chairman of the committee's West Side section.

Haag pleaded innocent at his arraignment Tuesday and requested a jury trial.

Haag, who operates the Venice West Cafe, 7 Dudley Ave., was arrested on the misdemeanor charge by plainclothes officers after a patron started reading poetry.

Haag claims the arrest is a continuation of police "harassment" which the cafe and its patrons have been subjected to "since long before my wife and I bought it two years ago."

He said his arrest came two days after he posted a

notice of plans to demonstrate against alleged police malpractices by the Ad Hoc Committee to End Police Malpractices. Haag is chairman of the committee's West Side section.

Six-Year 'Tradition'

"Poetry readings have been a tradition at the Venice West coffee house since its opening six years ago," Haag said.

"The cafe has never had a police permit and Venice officers have often been present during the readings. It took them six years to decide that poets should not read their works without police permission."

Herbert M. Porter, Haag's attorney, said he will take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary.

Paintings on Display

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Mar 28, 1965; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)
pg. WS5

Paintings on Display

VENICE - Artist Volde-

mar Darziņeks, a Latvian Cafe, 7 Dudley Ave.

native, is showing his paintings from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. nightly at the Venice West

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BEACH MUSIC

Coffee House Owner Hits Ban on Bongos

VENICE—A proposed ordinance to outlaw the playing of drums at city beaches has been sharply criticized by a local coffee house proprietor.

In an open letter to the Los Angeles City Council, John Haag, operator of the Venice West Cafe, charges that the ordinance would be "an affront to music and a vicious interference with the freedom of our citizens."

A City Council recreation and parks committee held a public hearing on the proposed ordinance last week and referred it to the Recreation and Parks Department for further study.

The committee recommended that the department study the proposal with the city attorney's office.

'Right to Play'

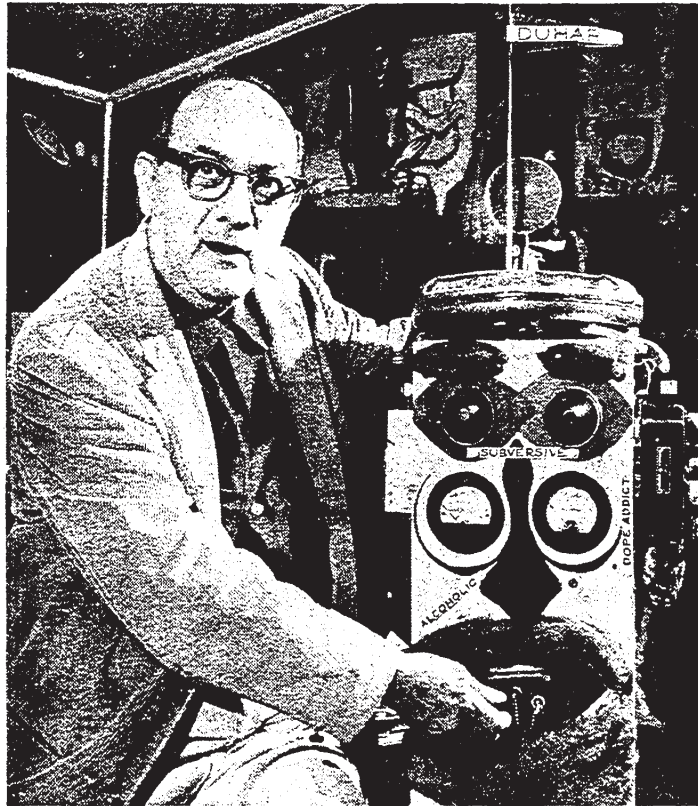
In his letter, Haag wrote: "We call on our City Council to uphold the right of citizens to play musical instruments on city recreational areas. There is little enough joy in today's world; let us not stifle what is left.

sleep by banging on bongos and trash cans until the early hours.

"We do not condone the disturbances," Haag wrote, "but we maintain that existing laws are adequate to curb such disturbances if the police choose to concentrate on law enforcement rather than on bowing to political pressures.

"What circumstances Dudley Avenue complained could bring the government that beatniks disturbed their of a major city to consider

outlawing music (without a permit) from those very areas set aside for public recreation?"



GADGET FOR TODAY.—Author Lawrence Lipton, chronicler of the beatnik scene, demonstrates his "robot," Duhab (detector of undesirable habits). Lipton says robot ferrets out the undesirables — including censors, book-burners.

Times photo

REPORTS OF DEMISE 'EXAGGERATED'

'We're Underground, but Not Dead,' Says 'Beat' Generation

BY DOUG MAULDIN
Times Staff Writer

VENICE — Mark Twain once termed reports of his death "greatly exaggerated."

That's precisely Lawrence Lipton's reaction to recent articles that the beat generation movement is all but dead here.

Lipton rates as an authority on the subject since writing "The Holy Barbarians," a 1959 best seller.

Today he lives with his wife in a neat cottage about a mile from the Venice West "beat" scene he chronicled in his book.

It may appear that the beats are vanishing, says Lipton, but it's just an illusion.

"What's happened is that the artistic element has gone underground," he said. "Artists, writers, painters and avant-garde film makers live and work in their own pads."

Last Public Haven

"And there are two or three times as many true beats here as there were in the 1950s when they were getting all of the publicity."

The Venice West Cafe is the last public haven for Beatniks here.

However the coffee house's current patrons have been called beat imitators.

Lipton calls them "late-comers."

"There have always been young people to whom the

beat way of life offered an escape from the rat race, whether they had any special artistic talent or not.

"Today they make the Venice West Cafe a place of refuge, but the neighborhood has now been invaded by ev-

ery type of misfit, including drug addicts," he says.

Lipton is a short, portly man with a deceptively benign face. Under the calm exterior is an angry writer

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BEATNIK DEMISE

Continued from First Page
constantly striking out at what he considers social ills.

His new book, "The Erotic Revolution," examines what he considers to be hypocritical and narrow-minded sexual mores in this country.

Bitter Over Campaign

He is particularly bitter about past campaigns to rid Venice of the Beatniks.

"The Venice West beat scene was the most promising attempt ever made to bring avant-garde culture to Southern California, and it was murdered by self-righteous, puritanical busy-bodies and hostile police," he says.

"We tried to make a Paris-type Bohemian community out of the Venice beachfront and scared the wits out of the resident fundamentalists and blue-nosed puritans who make up most of the elderly population of Venice."

Three art galleries and all of the coffee shops except the Venice West were closed during the campaign, Lipton said.

"The Venice Civic Union people who were in the forefront of these persecutions are now feeling the sharp end of the ax. Their homes and businesses are being bulldozed out of existence. It's poetic justice that they are sharing the fate of the beatniks they feared and despised."

suspicious cops."

"The serious and talented people retired into a kind of artistic underground. So nobody is left in the public places except curiosity seekers, slummers and youngsters who are looking for the real thing and don't know it has been smashed and driven underground."

"Instead of a new Paris, what we are getting in Venice is a new vertical slum to replace the horizontal slum of the past," says Lipton.

"In my view high-rise is nothing more than a gilded slum tenement. In such surroundings culture doesn't stand a chance."

"You can shut down an art gallery or coffee shop by per-

secution, but you can't stop an art movement or kill an idea."

Lipton says he isn't particularly perturbed that the beats have been forced underground, because:

COFFEE HOUSE ORDERED OUT

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Feb 3, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)
pg. WSI

COFFEE HOUSE ORDERED OUT

VENICE— The last of this area's coffee houses—the Venice West Cafe, 7 Dudley Ave.—has been served with an eviction notice effective Feb. 28. Cafe operator John Haag says he will meet with his attorney and cafe supporters to plan ways of fighting the eviction. Haag says if he has to move, he will open another coffee house in the Venice area.

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Venice West to Fight Eviction

KEN HANSEN

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jan 27, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)

pg. WS1



A TALK IN THE SUN—The topic of the Venice West Cafe — always sure to generate some heat among habitués and foes — lived up to its promise when the owner of the property on which it stands

announced an upcoming eviction order. Praised as a center for modern art and writing and blasted as a beatnik hangout, the cafe is operated by John Haag, at left, who defiantly tells Kurt Simon, of the

Venice Ocean Front Improvement Assn., he'll fight the ouster. In center, Mrs. Haag exchanges words with property owner Eugene Del Genio, while at right Del Genio hears the views of Simon's group, which

has long opposed the presence of the cafe. Some of the ire spilled over onto the adjoining W. E. B. DuBois Club chapter, which has quarters next to the cafe. The club rents its space from Mrs. Haag. Times photos by Gil Cooper

HAVEN FOR BEATNIKS

Venice West to Fight Eviction

BY KEN HANSEN

Times Staff Writer

VENICE—The last of the ment Assn., long-time foe of Venice coffee houses may be the coffee house, perking its final cup.

The Venice West Cafe—lord, says he was "shocked" praised as a center of modern art and writing and dimly-lit coffee house and beatniks—faces eviction. He attacked the political views of the club, saying it is "more than just left-wing."

Eugene del Genio, a member of the family who owns the property at 7 Dudley Ave., says he will serve a 30-day notice Tuesday on the cafe and on an adjacent office housing a W. E. B. DuBois Club chapter. The rent is due that day.

John Haag, 33, cafe operator, whose wife rents the space for the DuBois Club, says he will fight the notice, but just how he isn't certain.

A verbal donnybrook, involving much name-calling and heated accusations on the Ocean Front Walk near the cafe, preceded the announcement of the eviction notice this week.

Principals in Fracas

Involved in the oral fracas were Del Genio, a Chicago advertising man; Haag, the cafe operator; Haag's wife and Kurt Simon, a Brentwood resident and the articulate president of the Venice Ocean Front Improve-

Seen It Only Once
Del Genio saw the premises while on a visit this week to his mother, Mrs. Theresa del Genio of 728 Pier Ave.

He says he saw the coffee house only once before, three years ago, and the DuBois Club was not there then.

"I also question where they get the money to pay! Please Turn to Pg. 12, Col. 2

Venice West Cafe to Fight Eviction Move

Continued from First Page

the rent (\$75 monthly each on the cafe and club). He (Haag) doesn't make two quarters off that cafe."

Haag contends the eviction move is the result of "political intolerance" and pressure from the Venice Ocean Front Improvement Assn.

During the shouting match which erupted in bright sunshine on the ocean front, Haag told Del Genio: "Your mother assured me she wouldn't give in to the pressure of bigots."

Del Genio snapped back: "My mother is 82 years old. You took advantage of her."

Haag denied that either the cafe or club is politically inspired or financed.

He described the club as a socialist youth organization interested in peace movements, civil rights and the war on poverty.

He admitted that the coffee house is not self-supporting, but depends on the contributions of individuals.

Told of the accusation of financial aid from a political party, Haag declared: "That's pretty funny. We rely only on the kindness of strangers."

Simon said the Venice Ocean Front Improvement Assn. has been warring on the coffee houses because of the "undesirable element they attract."

He said the association, with about 40 members, is providing Del Genio with an attorney for the eviction move.

The Venice West Cafe for several years has been the last refuge for beat literati in Venice. In 1965 a municipal judge upheld the right of the cafe to have poetry readings without a police permit.

NEWS BRIEFS

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Mar 3, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)
pg. W51

NEWS BRIEFS

Venice West Ouster Ordered

VENICE--A court eviction order against the Venice West Cafe, last of the beatnik coffee houses here, was issued Wednesday by Municipal Judge Howard E. Crandall. Attorney James B. Fredericks, representing landlord Eugene del Genio, said he expects the order to be served within a week.

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Born-Again Beatniks

Oldtimers Haag, Hampton Carry On Their Long Fight for Peace and Freedom Party

By DAVID HOLLEY, Times Staff Writer

UNFURL THE BLACK FLAG: JOHN HAAG

THE BANNER
You & your lady fashion it
for me to carry
on the

4th of July

PARADES in Venice

USA

FLY THE BLACK FLAG
of freedom and mutual aid. . .

—Jack Hampton

From dusk to dawn, poets gathered nightly at Venice West, the most renowned cafe of Venice during an age when its artists, writers, musicians and assorted drop-outs were called beatniks.

"We had a bell, like a dinner bell, on the counter, and if someone wanted to read, they rang the bell and that was the signal for everyone to be quiet and listen," said John Haag, 51, the cafe's final owner.

Jack Hampton's L.A. Jazz Concert Hall, part of the same cultural scene of more than two decades ago, welcomed performances by the best of the coffeehouse literati.

"I had all the beat poets out of Venice—Sol White, Stuart Perkoff, all of them," Hampton, 71, recalled nostalgically. "With them I put together all the great jazz musicians on the West Coast."

Helped Found Party in 1967

Haag and Hampton, both poets, met at a coffee shop in the mid-1960s. Early protesters against the Vietnam War, they helped create the Peace and Freedom Party in 1967.

Those heady days of cultural and political radicalism ended for Haag and Hampton in a morass of personal sorrow and political frustration. The two dropped out, even from their alternative party's activities, for the better part of a decade.

Today the two old friends are seeking personal and political rejuvenation through Hampton's candidacy as the Peace and Freedom Party nominee in the Santa Monica-area 44th Assembly District—a campaign aimed at reestablishing an active Peace and Freedom Party organization on the Westside.

The obstacles are formidable. Hampton received 157 votes in the June 8 primary to win, unopposed, his party's nomination, while Tom Hayden drew 27,059 votes to win the Democratic nomination and Bill Hawkins won 13,985 votes to capture the Republican nomination. Ed Wolford, unopposed for the Libertarian Party nomination, received 231 votes.

The Peace and Freedom Party was founded in the belief that Democrats and Republicans were "equally incapable and unwilling to solve" problems of civil rights, poverty and war, said Haag, who was the party's first state chairman and now serves as Hampton's campaign manager.

"We still think that," he said. "We see the two-party system as two heads of the same monster. Maybe they talk a different dialect, but they end up doing the same thing."

Hampton and Haag are perennial candidates. Haag ran for state Senate in 1968, lieutenant governor in 1970 and Congress in 1974. He drew 16 votes as a write-in candidate in the 22nd state Senate District in the June 9 primary. Hampton ran for state treasurer in 1970 and the Santa Monica City Council in 1971.

Haag's first political stirrings came while studying English at Harvard University, after attending Catholic schools in upstate New York, he said.

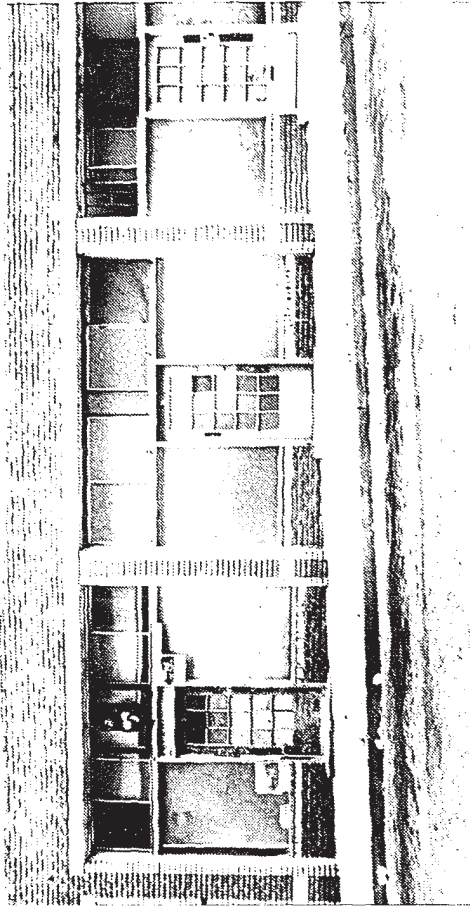
As a Harvard undergraduate, he said, "a real feeling of fright and sorrow with regard to atomic weapons" prompted him to join the United World Federation.

"Their aim was to unite the world in a federation similar to the United States, where there would be one world government. . . and no need for war to settle problems," he said. "Their main appeal was emotional and to some degree intellectual. It didn't deal with all the real political differences in the world."

In the late 1950s Haag went to Italy, where he lived in a working-class neighborhood, became friends with Italian socialists and communists, and met and married Anna, who helped him run Venice West a few years later.

Haag returned to the United States, came to California and found a job as a photo librarian and technical writer with an aerospace firm. He also discovered Venice West, which he had read about in "The Holy Bar-

Please see PEACE, Page 8



RICK CORRALES / Los Angeles Times

D FREEDOM PARTY



'I'm going to joust with windbags—the Republicans and Democrats,' says Jack Hampton, right, shown at Peace and Freedom Party press conference. John Haag, party co-founder, far right, says Hayden supporters 'are tilting at windmills because they think they're going to take over the Democratic Party.' Haag was last owner of Venice West, beatnik cafe at 7 Dudley Ave., now storefront with painted windows.

PEACE: Long Fight

Continued from First Page

barians," a popular book that described the Bohemian life of Venice.

"I became increasingly unhappy with what I was learning about nuclear armaments," Haag said. "Anna and I both started hanging around the Venice West cafe, because almost every evening there was a table of poets. It was a really exciting atmosphere for me to be in."

"While I considered it a cultural center, the police seemed to consider it an ongoing criminal conspiracy, as if people had drugs in their beards. . . . There was a great deal of police harassment of the coffeehouse and of people who went there."

Haag became a leader of protests against alleged police harassment of Venice beatniks, finally getting into an argument with an officer that led to the loss of the security clearance needed to keep his job. One evening in 1962 Haag, his wife, and a young white woman with a black boyfriend were parked in a Venice Boulevard parking lot. Officers came up to question them, claiming that they were checking a stolen car report.

"I gave them my name and I believe my address," Haag said. "It was at the point at which they asked where I worked that I balked."

Haag was taken into custody and fingerprinted. He later lost his job because of the incident, he said.

Haag and his wife took over the money-losing Venice West for a few hundred dollars later that year and scratched out a living from it until 1966, when they were evicted by a landlord angered in part by their decision to run a small office of the W.E.B. DuBois Club—which Haag described as "basically a Communist front"—next to the coffeehouse.

"There're still people in Venice who think I'm a Communist, although I never was," Haag said. "The rigid Marxists got all upset at the type of people we had in the Venice chapter—wild men, beatniks."

Haag said he quit the DuBois Club in 1966, after helping organize some of the first anti-war demonstrations in Los Angeles.

Eight years of work as a Peace and Freedom Party organizer followed, until a factional fight between socialists and libertarians at the 1974 party convention prompted him to drop out of party activities.

Constant political work and money problems helped lead to marital breakup and eventual divorce, Haag said. He remained active for a few years in the Venice Town Council, but sank into a deep depression.

"I think as much as anything I kind of burned out," Haag said. "The expression is kind of vague but it exists. Mainly I've had very severe—actually crippling—depressions. I dropped out of sight for about three years."

Haag has not returned to work and is living on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability payments based on "psychiatric problems," he said.

A Huckleberry Finn Childhood

Hampton traces his political beliefs to a Huckleberry Finn childhood in Sheboygan, Wis., as the son of a radical socialist Jewish carpenter from the Ukraine who nearly took his family back to the Soviet Union after the Communist revolution.

"My father was a militant union man," Hampton said. "I think it affected me all my life."

Hampton has run the Jack Hampton Theatrical Agency ever since he established it while a college student on the GI Bill in 1948. Although he volunteered for the Army during World War II, he became a pacifist during the Korean War, he said.

He read Marx, but as he studied Marxism he "realized the discrepancies" and moved to a philosophy of "the most amount of freedom with the least amount of control, and mutual aid." That phrase serves as his campaign slogan today.

Hampton's critique of American society is reflected in a limited-edition publication of "The Poems and Thoughts of Jack Hampton."

"I began to see the average American as nothing more than a taxable garbage disposal unit," reads one of the aphorisms in the little book.

A poem titled, "Thoughts on China's 20th Anniversary," describes a midnight walk on "the deserted streets of Beverly Hills" and reflects, "Tomorrow these walks will overflow with ghosts and freaks and monsters brutalized by self-interest" while "In Peking Comrade Mao and the People of China will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of their liberation."

Hampton earned a law degree from the University of West Los Angeles in 1973 but has never passed the Bar examination, he said.

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PEACE: Oldtimers Carry On Fight for Peace and Freedom Party

Continued from 8th Page

He too was burned out in the mid-1970s, he said.

"My wife died and I couldn't study," he said. "I intend to take the Bar. My mind has come back. I'm not as sad as I was."

The major internal issue faced by the Hampton campaign and the 15 dues-paying members of the Santa Monica-Venice chapter of the party has been how sharply Hampton should attack Hayden during the fall campaign.

Although Hayden attended the first national Peace and Freedom Party convention in Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1968, and was seen at the time as sympathetic to the party's goals, the Hampton campaign organization has decided to wage a head-on campaign against both Hayden and Hawkins in the Nov. 2 general election, Hampton said.

The chance to run against Hayden was one of the at-

tractions of entering the 44th Assembly District race, Hampton said.

Supporters "thought there would be a tremendous thing happening, because Hayden would be running and I would run against him," Hampton said. "You have a radical and an activist in me, and a former radical and semiactivist in him."

Some party members, however, "have argued against strong opposition to Hayden," according to a press release prepared by Haag, "and have urged a campaign that would emphasize the Peace and Freedom Party platform planks that call for drastic cuts in military spending to allow for massive programs to ensure income, housing, health care and a poison-free environment for all.

"Cautious about alienating voters who, without Hayden's candidacy, would vote for Hampton, they suggested a Hampton campaign slogan of, 'vote for

whomever you please, but register peace and Freedom Party.'

"Other party activists, including Hampton, have argued that Hayden's quest for votes at any cost has resulted already in his taking positions on vital issues that are just as conventional and obsolete as those of regular Democrats and Republicans. They agree with Jack Hampton's recent attack on Hayden's endorsement of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, in which Hampton charged that Hayden, despite his radical reputation, is willing to support war and militarism if that's what it takes to get elected."

"After full discussion about this aspect of the Hampton campaign, the campaign committee decided on a vigorous campaign on all the issues with no attempt to placate Hayden supporters."

Hampton and Haag reject the notion that tiny third-

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PEACE: Long Fight

Continued from 9th Page

party efforts are pointless.

“Don Quixote jostled with windmills,” Hampton said. “I’m going to joust with windbags—the Republicans and Democrats. These people are greater than Dostoevski when they speak of crime and punishment. They never speak of unemployment, which causes the crime.”

Hayden and his supporters “are tilting at windmills,” Haag said, “because they think they’re going to take over the Democratic Party.”

Hayden will either become indistinguishable from other Democratic politicians or be eliminated from any significant role in the party, Haag predicted.

The Peace and Freedom Party’s annual state convention is being held this weekend at the UCLA Student Union, Haag said.

“We care more about the next generation than the next election,” he added.

WESTSIDE DIGEST**Santa Monica**

Westside Peace and Freedom Party members have established, for the first time since 1974, a local party organization.

Activists drawn together by Jack Hampton's 44th Assembly District campaign announced they intend to open a Santa Monica headquarters soon and continue the party's endeavors beyond the Nov. 2 election.

Members of the party's county central committee are Hampton, Steven Harris and John Haag of Santa Monica, and Irving Goff, Duncan Lawson, James Sommer and Anita Trudeau of Venice. An open meeting and party will be held at 9 p.m. Friday, July 9, at 525 Georgina Ave., Santa Monica.

Jonathan Moore, a teacher of English as a second language at Madison Elementary School, was honored with the first Teacher of the Year award by the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education.

Criteria considered in making the selection included academic achievement of students, involvement with parents and community, professional and civic awards, philosophy of teaching and reasons for having chosen teaching as a profession. Moore was credited with helping many of his students move out of the English-as-a-second-language program into regular classrooms in just one year.

"This is one of the happiest moments in my life," Moore said when presented the award.

Moore also teaches English to parents two evenings a week. Parents often call him at home, wait in the hall in the morning or meet him at lunchtime or after school to ask questions about their children or discuss problems in coping with life in the United States, according to district officials.

"Many students view Jonathan as someone they can trust and rely on until they adjust to life in a new country," Principal Art Bystrom said.

Other teachers recognized for dedication and professionalism were Sally Bone, a sixth-grade teacher at John Muir Elementary School; Pat Honey, an eighth- and ninth-grade English teacher at Malibu Park Junior High School; Steven Macy, a math teacher at Lincoln Junior High School; Maureen McLaughlin of John Adams Junior High School, and Carol Neel, a kindergarten teacher at McKinley Elementary School.

Creation of a four-acre park at the west end of Ocean Park Boulevard near the beach is the major proposal of a beach improvement plan drawn up by the architectural firm of Moore Ruble Yudell.

The park would include fields for games, barbecue facilities, picnic tables, bath and shower facilities, a promenade for vendors and a children's play area.

The plan is an outgrowth of the city's agreement with Lincoln Property to complete the last phase of the Ocean Park Redevelopment Project on the beach. Financing for the plan, which also included street and traffic changes, would be from a \$7 million cash contribution from Lincoln.

The City Council is scheduled to take action on the proposals at its July 6 meeting in City Hall.

Two Westside clinics previously rejected for funding by the City of Santa Monica will get money from the city after all.

The City Council voted 4 to 2 to give \$30,000 to the Westside Women's Clinic for menopausal women and \$15,000 to the Venice Family Clinic.

The funding was part of the city's nearly \$1 million in federal revenue sharing monies for 1982-83.

While the council said the money was designed to serve Santa Monica residents, no formal proposal limiting the city's amount to city residents was adopted along with the appropriation. Both groups are located outside of Santa Monica.

Councilwoman Christine Reed led the opposition to the allocations, contending the city was raising expectations beyond its ability to pay in the future.

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THE VENICE peace & freedom party

by John Haag

The first office of the California Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) was located in Venice at 1415 W. Washington Blvd. There in 1967, a small group of civil rights and anti-Vietnam War activists did much of the work that began the ambitious task of putting a new political party on the ballot.

Convinced that neither the Democrat nor Republican parties would offer an anti-war candidate for President in 1968, the group proposed a new party that would run candidates at every level, who were opposed to war, racism, and poverty. The platform and candidates would be chosen by party members after the party qualified for the ballot.

Beginning with 30 registrations on June 23, 1967, we had to register over 66,000 California voters in the new and unknown party by the end of the year. As the registration drive slowly gained momentum, the Venice office was moved to a more central location in Los Angeles. PFP voter registrars continued to work in Venice, one of the few communities where it proved worthwhile to go door-to-door.

Eventually the "Venice registration drive", as some critics described it, spread throughout California and by December had become a sort of state-wide, floating anti-war demonstration. We qualified for the ballot with over 105,000 voters registered in the PFP, 1,600 of them in Venice.

The Venice PFP's first experience with local issues came early in 1968 when the LAPD Metro Squad was sent to Venice to "clean up the hippies". We organized demonstrations against the scores of unjustified arrests and helped to get legal aid for those arrested. Later that year a new Venice office was set up at 1727 W. Washington Blvd, where we worked on local campaigns for Congress, State Senate, and Assembly, and on the Eldridge Cleaver for President campaign.

After the 1968 election the Venice PFP decided to concentrate on community organizing in Venice. Our first project was a community news-



APRIL 1978 ISSUE 100 P. O. BOX 504 VENICE, CA 90291

paper. The first issue of the Free Venice Beachhead appeared in December, 1968. The paper's 10,000 copies were distributed mainly door-to-door by PFP members on their own streets.

In 1969 we set up the Free Venice Organizing Committee to coordinate Venice projects, encourage community control of community affairs, and look into the possibility of seceding from Los Angeles. Early in the year we circulated a petition against a proposed freeway through Venice which was ultimately defeated. We started bringing together all elements of the community to oppose the city's "Master Plan" to turn Venice into a Miami Beach kind of development and we held the first public meeting to oppose the canal redevelopment plan, which would have turned that area into a "junior Marina".

Rick Davidson ran for City Council that year emphasizing the issues of the Free Venice Organizing Committee and proposing grass-roots decision making more binding than that of the Venice Town Council, which was started later by Councilwoman Pat Russell.

The "Free Venice" idea proliferated. There was a Free Venice Art Festival on the Ocean Front every weekend for several months. There was a Free Venice hot-line, started independently of the PFP and a Free Venice Food Co-op not connected with either the PFP or the Free Venice Organizing Committee. The Beachhead became a collective independent of the other groups.

In 1970 the Venice PFP office served as the state office of the Party and was mainly responsible for preparing the Party for the 1970 election. We published three issues of a party newspaper, then, with the Long Beach PFP chapter, organized a state convention in Long Beach to update the Party platform and plan for the election campaign. After the convention we publi-

shed the revised platform and information about candidates and organized its distribution to PFP members throughout the state.

Venice furnished two of the seven candidates for state office. Marge Buckley, who ran for Attorney General, got the highest number of votes of any PFP candidate on the ballot, and I ran for Lieutenant Governor.

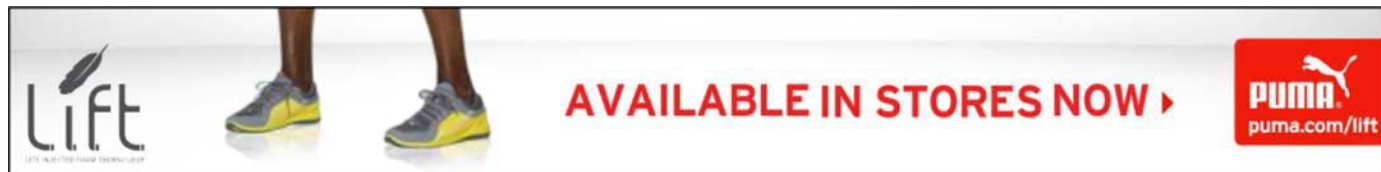
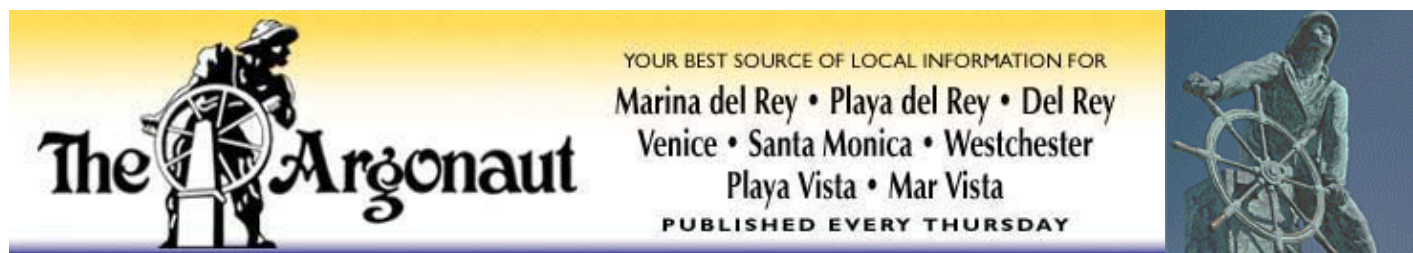
In 1971 and '72 the Venice PFP office was also the office of the PFP National Organizing Committee. With independent political parties in other states, we helped to form the national coalition People's Party that ran Dr. Benjamin Spock for President in 1972.

Several Venice PFP members went to other states to start ballot drives: Steve Clare to Pennsylvania, Sari Nielsens to Hawaii, Eric Garris to Idaho, I to Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

At the end of 1972 the Venice PFP office closed and only occasional meetings were held after that. However, in 1974 the Peace and Freedom Party candidate for Governor was Elisabeth Keatley, a Venice resident.

For several years the Venice Peace and Freedom Party was the focus of intense political activity involving hundreds of Venice residents in efforts that made their mark both in Venice and beyond. Although no longer organized in Venice, the Party is still on the California ballot.

And in Venice others have taken up the struggle that seemed so hopeless in 1969 to preserve our community and the people in it, and to let us read about it in our own free newspaper.

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Wednesday, April 22, 2009 Last modified: Thursday, April 6, 2006 10:12 AM PDT

Venice: Political activist and poet John Haag dies

BY RAHNE PISTOR

John Haag — called a "quiet leader" of the Venice Beatnik literary scene and later the politics of peace and freedom— died Saturday, April 1st, following years of failing health. He was 75.

A memorial service is being planned for a not-yet-specified date. Haag has been cremated.

Much of the foundation of Venice's activist community can be linked to Haag's efforts. He co-founded the Free Venice Beachhead, a local activist newspaper with an emphasis on poetry; and co-founded the Venice Peace and Freedom Party in 1967, under which he ran for the offices of lieutenant governor and state controller.

He organized against the Vietnam War, against racial segregation, was a devoted pacifist, and worked against ways he said corporate greed and development affected the local Venice community.

"He considered himself an anarchist, and his core beliefs were developing and supporting people's right to freedom," says Jim Smith, who met Haag in 1969 and continues to this day to be a main organizer of the Venice Peace and Freedom Party.

Haag ran the Venice West Caf♦ (currently Sponto Gallery) for a time, which, along with The Gas House, was one of Venice's two main Beatnik poet hangouts in the 1950s and early 1960s.

A popular Venice Beatnik poet himself, Haag increasingly fused politics with his poetry as the years passed and he believed that activism and self-expression went hand in hand.

He was known for his active fight against harassment and intimidation of Beatniks by the Los Angeles Police Department, after witnessing repeated instances of what he considered police misconduct at the Venice West Caf♦, according to Smith.

"Practically every night the cops were picking on somebody, outside or inside, whatever," Haag was quoted as saying, protesting what he labeled as attempts to drive the bohemian community out of Venice. "And I got real tired of it."

Displaying a tendency to become politically involved that was rare among early Beatniks, Haag fought against Los Angeles City Council attempts to curb free speech, including a 1965 ordinance that banned bongo playing.

"A number of other Beats were not politically active and would not get involved with politics even when there was an issue that affected them directly," says Smith. "John was different."

Allegedly due to his activism, Haag began being personally targeted for police harassment. After purchasing the Venice West Caf♦, Haag was arrested for holding poetry readings without an entertainment permit.

Following Haag's activism, many local bohemians and artists began to develop a strong political consciousness in the mid-1960s that is still evident in the Venice community today.

"He was not a lone wolf," Smith says. "He worked together with others seeking to free themselves from imposing social, political and economic forces."

Locally, Haag was part of successful efforts to block the City of Los Angeles from building a freeway near West Washington Boulevard (now Abbot Kinney Boulevard), and from widening the Venice Canals to accommodate yachts.

Haag worked with numerous activist groups on different levels. He served as a founding president of the Venice Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and he co-founded the Free Venice movement with the late Rick Davidson.

Haag was the publicity chairman of the Venice/Santa Monica chapter of CORE (Congress on Racial Equality).

Haag came to Southern California after graduating from Harvard University. He was born on December 14th, 1930, in Albany, New York and is survived by a son, Thomas Paine Haag, and a daughter, Duanna Haag.

Venice West and the LA Scene (2006)

Swinging in the Shadows (Part One)

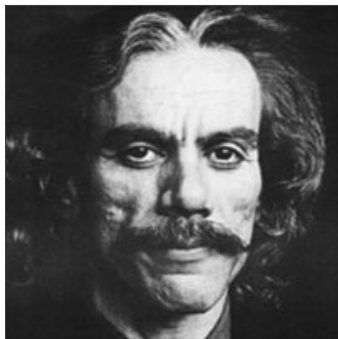
Participants



Stuart Perkoff

(Poet/Artist) 1930-1974
Perkoff was a central figure in the Beat Era period in Southern California. He influenced and encouraged many, including the poets profiled in **Venice West and the LA Scene**. It is fortunate that many of his readings were recorded and preserved. We have been able to use several of his poems from these audiotapes. He opened Venice West Café in 1958

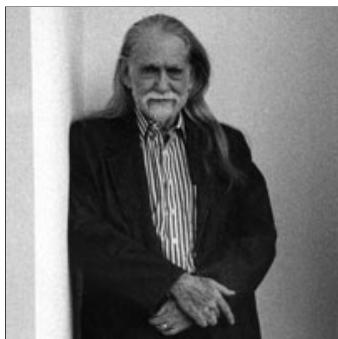
and provided a place for the underground to read their poetry and exhibit their artwork. Writer Lawrence Lipton was so intrigued by the group that he wrote "The Holy Barbarians" which chronicled their exploits. Years later, John Maynard wrote "Venice West" which told more of the history of Stuart Perkoff and his poet pals, Tony Scibella and Frank Rios.



William Margolis (Poet)

Will, in fragile health and in a wheelchair, died a year after his interview in 1997. He was a major figure in the poetry world of both San Francisco and Southern California. During the 50's he and Poet, Bob Kaufman, published "Beatitude" in North Beach. By the 60s he had moved to Venice and became part of the Temple of Man, a repository and archive

started by Bob Alexander, which includes both written and artistic work produced by this underground cultural group. After the death of Alexander, Margolis took over the written archives of the Temple of Man. His home contained countless copies of rare publications from the 50's and beyond, which have now been preserved by other members of the group, still active today.



Charles Brittin

(Photographer)
Charles took photographs of his friends, the underground artists and poets in Los Angeles during the 50's/60's. Fortunately, he captured the scene; otherwise, there would be almost no visual record of it. He didn't take snap shots. All are beautifully composed and outstanding photographs of individuals who influenced his life and

creativity. Brittin also became involved in the civil rights movement and had his camera ready to document the brutality he experienced while marching with demonstrators. In 1999 there was a retrospect of these photographs as well as those he took of his 50s companions at the Craig Krull Gallery in Santa Monica. This gallery published an excellent book of his work from that show. Over the years he has continued in his chosen field of photography and has been exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the world. Now his photographs are in the archives at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Philomene Long (Poet/Film Maker)

In the late 50's Philomene was in a convent at the top of the Santa Monica Mountains. Moments before she was to take her



Tony Scibella

(Poet/Artist)
Tony came from a blue-collar background. After his stint in the Korean War, he made a radical shift in his life and started painting. He was turned on to poetry by the influential Venice poet, Stuart Perkoff and soon became part of the underground group in Venice. Over the years he maintained his commitment, dedicating

his life to writing poetry. Scibella provided much of the narrative for the documentary, reading from "the kid in america", which are his reminiscences of that time. **Tony Scibella** died in October 2003 before the completion of this documentary but his spirit lives on in Venice West.



Frank Rios (Poet/Artist)

Rios had been a heroin addict in New York City. He came to California and fell into the Venice poetry scene, meeting Stuart Perkoff and Tony Scibella. With their influence and encouragement, Frankie found his own voice and became a poet; ultimately changing the direction of his life. Even though he continued to struggle with addiction and spent time in jail, he kept writing

throughout those chaotic years. Finally, he was able to kick his habit and stay free of drugs; writing his poetry without the added difficulties of an addict lifestyle. Frankie also creates outstanding paper collages that display his visual talent.



Saul White (Artist/Poet)

Saul, part of the Venice avant-garde group of artist and poets, was first and foremost, a painter; although he continued to write poetry throughout his life. He read his poems and those of Stuart Perkoff, often performing live with a jazz group. His death in May 2003 is particularly sad in lieu of the fact that in the last couple of years of his life he had begun to receive some recognition

for his strong, abstract paintings with several gallery exhibitions as well as an exhibition at San Jose Museum of Modern Art in November 2003.

Aya (Poet/Photographer)

Aya was part of the poetry scene in both Venice and San Francisco's North Beach, living in both areas during the Beat Era. She and David Meltzer first met in a poetry class in Los Angeles during the 50s. Then, later they read together at the 6 Gallery in San Francisco after she moved to San Francisco. Her husband then was Elias Romero. He performed the first "Light Shows" at bars and coffee houses in North Beach while Aya read poetry. Throughout the years, she's been involved in many endeavors. Continuing to write poetry, she also collaborated on short films and a documentary. She is an astrologer and Zen Buddhist. Artist George Herms' Love Press published her book, "Zen Love Poems." Her own distinctive drawings have been used to illustrate much of her published

vows to become a nun, she changed her mind and escaped down the mountain, ending up in Venice. She eventually met Stuart, Tony and Frankie. Having written poems earlier, it was natural for her to continue her writing and find a home with the Venice poets. She became Stuart Perkoff's companion during the last part of his life. Over the years, Long also did a couple of short films--one called "The Beats", which contains comments from several luminaries of the beat generation. She has contributed two excerpts from this film for my documentary. Another of her varied works was "Bukowski in the Bathtub", based on visits and conversations between her husband, John Thomas and Charles Bukowski. Sadly, there will be no more from **Philomene Long**, who died tragically this August (2007). She will be missed.



John Thomas (Poet)

Thomas hitchhiked out to California from the East in 1959. The ride that took him to Los Angeles left him in Beverly Hills so he spent his last bit of cash to take a bus to Venice. He quickly became part of the underground in Venice, writing poetry and cooking the meals that were given free of charge to artists and poets at the Gas House. Over the years, John wrote several books and volumes of poetry. He and his wife, Philomene Long collaborated on various writing projects. "LA Exile, A Guide to Los Angeles Writing 1932-1998" published in 1999 profiled John Thomas along with other renowned writers like Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Steinbeck who lived and worked in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, John Thomas died in 2002, a very sad loss for his wife, Philomene.

poetry. She was editor for Matrix, one of the first spiritual/feminist/literary journals published in the early 70s. Aya's non-fiction book, "Way of the Warrior Priestess" is available on Amazon.com. Her most recent book of poetry is "She Arising."



David Meltzer and Aya (Tarlow) 2007
After joint reading at Beyond Baroque, Venice, Ca

David Meltzer (Poet/Writer)

David was very young (still a teenager) when he met many of the artists around Syndell Studio and the early Ferus in the 50s. Abstract Expressionism as well as jazz has had a profound effect on his writing. After he moved to San Francisco in 1957, he started reading his poetry at The Cellar in North Beach and other hangouts. He was an active participant in the San Francisco Renaissance and is still involved in the Bay Area poetry scene. Meltzer teaches poetry at the New College of California in San Francisco. He also has a continuing interest in music. During the late 60s, he and his wife had a rock group, "Serpent Power" and produced a couple of albums. Later, he was a jazz critic for the Bay Guardian and over the years has written numerous articles and two books on jazz. One of his volumes of sequential poems is in the voice of Lester Young, titled "No Eyes." Over the years, he has continued to publish books, essays, anthologies as well as his poetry. City Lights published "San Francisco Beat" - "Talking with the Poets" edited by David Meltzer. "The Beat Thing", his series of poems on the Beat Era experience was out a couple of years ago. His most recent book of poetry is "David's Copy", published by Penguin and available in bookstores throughout the country.

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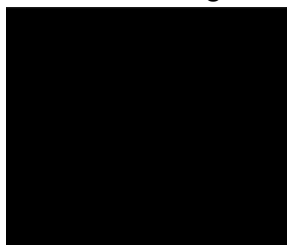
VENICE paper

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"Line Caught, not Farm Raised"

Always Forward, Never Straight



READ THE STORY BEHIND NEIL STRATTON AND SCOTT MAYER'S FILM OF THIS CRITICAL MASS BIKE RIDE IN VENICEPAPER'S OCTOBER 06 ISSUE OUT ON THE STREETS, NOW.

Also in this Issue

- New Images from Kenny Morrison

- Marvin Rand, Architectural Photographer. 1924 - 2009.

- 5.30 a.m.

- Permit Parking Vote-Count Fiasco

- art la 09: no country for old men

- art la, seen

- [Signing up for VenicePaper Email Alerts?](#)

- Before Dark

- Earth Shaking Update

- Quoted

- Hertz Exhibits Balls of Steel

- Letter From An Alleged Publisher

- Spontodiciously Where No Art Gallery Ever Went

- Robert Graham Memorial Service Set for January 7

- Sponto?!?, Say it Ain't So, More Letters on the Man

- Archive

Venice Goodbyes

Spontodiciously Where No Art Gallery Ever Went



photo: Bernardo Charca
 1.11 at 11:00 a.m. Venetians gather to remember Sponto.

January 5, 2008 7:23PM. Venice--Mark "Sponto" Kornfeld (Aug 29, 1949 to Dec 28, 2008) greeted folks with the vivacious "Yo We." The "We" took his Spontolicious sing-songy slang into the "We are all oneness" realm. He hybridized "spontaneous" simultaneity with that feisty "pronto" punch, reinventing the spirit of the Beats.

Artist/curator Sponto nurtured the creative and Love community in Venice, California for 24 years at his 7 Dudley Avenue. This location was the very same home of the infamous Venice West Cafe from 1958 to 1966, one of the birthplaces of a free-spirited literature and art movement. The Beats shared themes of spirituality, environmental awareness and political dissidence. Sponto felt the sacred ground bubbling up from the Beat roots, and extended it. Outty. Spontropy.

Sponto cultivated a glorious garden of wonders and Spontasmagorical liberation. He transformed the whole concept of the art gallery into perceptual otherness--the SPONTOFICATION RITUAL. Now here this!

Sponto Gallery was and is: 1- Art gallery - locals, international, homeless, children's art. Where no percentage was taken, all

sales go to the artist. Whaa???

2- Very Live music venue - Azar Lawrence, Country Joe McDonald, Jazz Funk Fest, and tons more - The Beat Goes Spon.

3- 7 Dudley Cinema - earth shaking experimental films and discussions - all volunteer, free admission.

4- Exotic playground where many a soulmate met their match.

5- Poetry center carrying on the Venice West Cafe tradition.

6- Political activist forum with the likes of Alexander Cockburn, Blaise Bonpaine, Paul Krassner and much more like raising money to feed the homeless and helping New Orleans musicians.

7- Sponto championed bicycle activism and 7 Dudley Cinema showed Critical Mass bike films. His assemblage sculptures were often made of found objects, like the Sponto Cristo, which was composed of bike parts.

8- One of a kind events like Ms Beatnik Contest, and the Dumpster Diving Fashion Show.

9- Party central - ain't no party like a sponto party cause a sponto party don't stop. Backgammon Spontoisseurs.

10- SIC - Spiritually Incorrect Comedy - Live.

11- Got additions?

Shall I go on? We'z in double figures and there so much more to add. The Spontorage rages Eternal in Love and Laughter and Laughtears and whatever other word that describes what living is really all about, a word that hasn't been invented yet.

Sponto nourished our clan, and there ain't no stopping us now. We're on the move. Don't matter where the place is. We are on top of it. We are the Little Rascals puttin' on THE show. He was and always will be our Righteous Entrepreneur of Rascality, and we ain't gonna let him down. Yo We. One Love Mojo. Spontodelic Spontoons.

If you ever burned a fatty *wif* dis bad boy, ya know what i be talkin bout. Spontorific herbal knowledge. Ya be diggin infinity till the cows come home. Dancin barefoot round da campfire. Ya be shootin up to da rafters, homey. Rasta Sponto. Spontolini 7 1/2. The Man, the Myth, the Movie - 4:20 to Zuma. Where else

in this multi-verse could one actually raise consciousness and vote under the same woof? The Bomb. The Atomic Dawg barkin' the history of the future. Non-medical. Get on the Doobie Nova Bus. Squanto.

Sponto was a real mutha fo'ya. He showered generous gifts at Mother's Day to many, often rapping them in aluminum foil, which he called Sponto Rap. He loved shiny. Sponto was once an almost-pro-tennis-player. He loved cheese on everything. His Spontopolis operated in the inclusive realm, not in the "guilty until proven rich" exclusivity - a direct democracy utopia of participatory involvement. He often employed *houseless* people, one of which declared "They'll never get him out of there now." Spontoneers and Spontanarians unify in the Spontopolitan Bohemia.

Abbott Kinney invented Venice and Sponto reinvented it. Soon after Kinney died, the pier burned. Soon after Sponto died, the Gallery may close, but we'll be burnin' the Sponto light forever. Bustin' the bardos loose. Wanna be King of the Spontoprize. Let's meet and have community now.

"It's all good, Sponti."

--Gerry Fialka

Editor's note: Missing Sponto? There will be memorial this Wednesday, January 7 at 10 p.m. after a screening of several films on Venice at Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. Films start at 6:30 p.m.

A daytime memorial is planned for January 11 at 11 a.m. At the Boardwalk where Dudley Avenue hits it.

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COMMENTS

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Venice West Café Photographs



Venice West Cafe, 7 E. Dudley Avenue, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)



Venice West Cafe, 7 E. Dudley Avenue, c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Venice West Café after Sponto Gallery, 7 E. Dudley Avenue, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)



Venice West Café Building, 321 S. Oean Front Walk, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)



Venice West Café building, 321 S. Ocean Front Walk, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)



*Venice West Café building windows sealed in 1966, 321 S Ocean Front Walk, March 12, 2009
(Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



Venice West Café building, Dudley Avenue facade, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)



Venice West Cafe, 7 E. Dudley Avenue, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)



Venice West Café building as The Breakers in background, c1940 (Los Angeles Public Library)



Huffstutter's original photo of Venice West Café in 1960



Jazz Combo seen at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Jazz Combo at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Jazz Combo performs at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Bongos played at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Family at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Playing chess at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Poetry reading at Venice West Cafe-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



Stuart Perkoff, Venice West Café founder-c1960 (Photograph by Austin Anton)



John Haag, owner of Café from 1962-1966 in 1970



Venice West Cafe, 7 E. Dudley Avenue, March 12, 2009 (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)