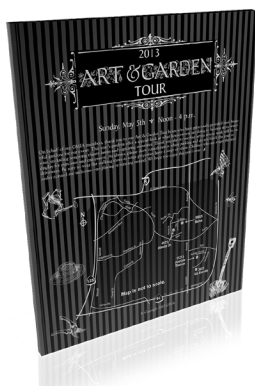


A Community Newsletter from the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association

Spring is in the Air Garden Tour Time

Mark your calendars for Sunday, May 5th to enjoy the GMIA Art & Garden Tour. Inside this issue you will find our Garden Tour brochure and map. Be sure to bring this with you as you visit four amazing gardens in our neighborhood.



As always, admission to our Garden Tour is complimentary for GMIA member households. When members visit their first garden, they will receive wrist bands that will provide entry at each additional garden. Nonmembers may participate on the tour for a nominal donation (\$5). There is no entry charge for children under 18 years old.

While it is not our intention to open our tour to the general public, we will accommodate guests who wish to experience our event. We will gladly enroll new members at the tour for our annual fee of \$18 per household.

Please be aware, however, that our organizational by-laws limit membership to residents or homeowners within our borders.

Our geographic boundaries extend from east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd. ▲

Phil's B•B•Q + Friends & Neighbors = A Great Event: GMIA Annual Meeting

We are so pleased to invite you to attend our Annual Meeting on June 23rd. Enjoy mouth-watering fare from Phil's BBQ along with locally produced craft beer & wine at our GMIA Annual Meeting. The meeting will take place at the magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. Our program will include Supervisor Dianne Jacob who will update us about issues of community interest. The meeting will take place from 5:30 – 8:30 pm.

Please be sure to invite your neighbors and encourage them to become GMIA members.

Note: reservations are required. This dinner event is \$10 per GMIA member. Our Annual Meeting is designed for GMIA members but nonmembers may attend for \$20 per person.

As a special bonus, complimentary tours of the Garden will precede the Annual Meeting. For those who wish to participate in a complimentary tour, please be sure to note that on your reservation. Tour time is 4:30 p.m.

Get to know your neighbors and enjoy an evening under the stars. This is a great opportunity to connect with old friends, meet new friends, and hear what's going on in our area. Mark your calendar and mail your reservation form today or reserve online at our secure website, www.gmia.net. See you there! ▲

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GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Officers

Susan Nichols, President
440-1607

Dan Mitrovich, 1st Vice President

Larry Nichols, Treasurer/Membership
440-1607

Kay Bickley, Secretary
318-5260

Directors

Sue Creveling	Jeff Rule
Kathleen Hedburg	Pat Ryan
Allison Henderson	Mark Schuppert
Tom Huffman	Mike Valley
Dagmar Miller	Holly Yarris
Don Newcom	Dave Zimmerman
Tom Osteen	

Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.

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www.gmia.net

MISSION

GMIA is a 70+ year old nonprofit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.

Message from the President

Remembering Rosemary Hewicker

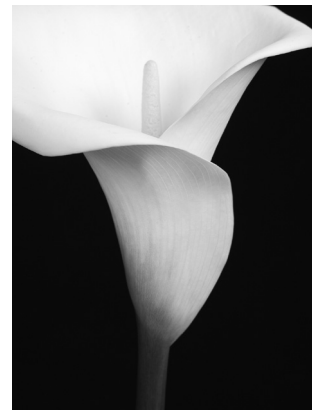
(September 8, 1930 – February 5, 2013)

Please join me in remembering longtime GMIA Board Member Rosemary Hewicker, who recently passed away. A resident of Mt. Helix since the early 1960's, Rosemary was known by all for her great depth of understanding about our neighborhood and dedication to our community.

Her childhood on a small farm in Illinois instilled in Rosemary strong mid-western values and "can do" spirit. As a girl she summered in Colorado where she hiked, rode on horseback, and enjoyed the rigors of outdoor life. Rosemary was a graduate of the University of Colorado; she spent her summers as a hiking counselor in the Rocky Mountains. It was while at the university that she met her husband John whom she married in 1953. John's early career with the FBI took the couple to Portland, San Francisco, Oklahoma City and San Diego. Rosemary, an English teacher, taught high school. Then in 1961, the Hewickers returned to San Diego where John became a prosecuting attorney. Driving through our Mt. Helix neighborhood, Rosemary found the perfect view lot. There they built their home and started a family, enjoying a semi-rural life style and the pleasure of keeping horses (along with a myriad collection of other animals) on their property.

After son Mark and daughter Mary Ann grew up, Rosemary returned to teaching part-time at Chase Elementary School. She and John enjoyed world travel and visited India, the Mediterranean, Scandinavia, Russia, Alaska and other far-flung destinations. Rosemary was sharp as a tack and known for her wit. Many organizations benefitted from her participation: the East County Arts Association, the La Mesa Women's Club, Tempos, and GMIA. Her dedication to GMIA was inspiring to us all.

As her son Mark so beautifully stated at her memorial service, Rosemary was "a card carrying member of the Greatest Generation." We salute her many decades of service to our community. We are grateful to have known her; she will be missed. ▲



Thank You Donors!

Thanks to the following donors who have made gifts to GMIA of \$25 or more in excess of their annual dues in the past three months: Gail Andrade, Rupert & Barbara Blackmun, Robert & Mary Annette Hall, Jim & Brenda Richmond, Florrie Taylor, Donald & Margaret Weller and David & Jocelyn Zimmerman. ▲

Want a Commercial Business Next Door?

*Lemon Avenue Residents
& GMIA Say NO!*

Planners for the City of La Mesa have ignored community concerns and recommended a Commercial Land Use designation for two properties located at the northwest and southwest corners of Lemon Avenue and Bancroft. The Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association opposes this zoning change.

We have been contacted by GMIA members and other residents who are affected by this proposal to their residential neighborhood. We have listened to their concerns and believe a commercial land use does not conform to the surrounding single-family neighborhood. Designating these properties as commercial sites will have negative impacts to the character of the community, quality of life and potential home values.

Years ago, a prior proposal to develop a commercial use at this location was considered and denied, due to the non-conforming nature of the proposal and strong neighborhood opposition. GMIA believes a re-designation of this site for commercial use will do irreparable harm to the surrounding neighbors and to this residential neighborhood. GMIA calls on the City of La Mesa to reverse course to maintain the character of our community. ▲



Improvement Committee Progress Report

Our GMIA Improvement Committee has embraced the goal of enhancing our Grossmont-Mt. Helix entryways. We are happy to announce that we have successfully devised a plan to partner with CalTrans to improve the "Park and Ride" and adjacent area at the westbound I-8 Fuerte/Severin offramp. Plans are underway to clear existing weeds, install a thick bed of mulch next to the traffic lane on the ramp (to suppress weeds), install irrigation along the fence, and plant vines to screen the chain link and thereby provide an attractive green foliage wall. Our thanks to Supervisor Jacob for her help in jump-starting this process.

We hope you have noticed the tidy new drought tolerant planting and repainted sign on the triangular island at Fuerte Drive and Grossmont Boulevard. Your GMIA Board removed the oversize agave (6 trash cans full of greenery!), cleaned out chunks of concrete debris from the stone planter, and installed new soil along with the plants. The oversize concrete bowl that formerly perched on the island was donated to the Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden where it will be utilized in their succulent garden. Thanks to GMIA Directors Dave Zimmerman, Tom Osteen, Kay Bickley, Jeff Rule, Susan Nichols and Larry Nichols for their work to complete this project.

If you have an Improvement Project to suggest, or if you would like to be a part of our Improvement Team, please call Larry Nichols at 619-440-1607 or email at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. ▲

Repairs to Hillside on Fuerte Drive

Be on the look-out for work to be done on the south side of Fuerte Drive, close to the Fuerte/Mt. Helix Drive intersection. At that site, a nearly vertical gunnite wall is crumbling and potentially endangering the home located above on the embankment. The County plans to shore up the hillside with steel supports and pressure treated wood to ensure public safety. The Valle de Oro Planning Board has requested that work not proceed until Grossmont High School lets out for summer break, but we don't know if the County will delay. Please use caution when this construction (or any other area construction) is underway. ▲



TIDBITS of History

by Tom O'Steen

DID YOU KNOW that in and around the 1900's the areas that we commonly describe today as Grossmont, Severin Manor, and the southern portion of Fletcher Hills were made up of two ranches named the Alta Ranch and the Villa Caro Ranch? A man named Hervey Parke, who had an untimely death from heart failure on February 8, 1899, owned the ranches.

After Hervey Parke's death, the two ranches fell into disrepair. In addition, the national economy was in a recession. By 1902, the ranches had been foreclosed upon and the bank was actively trying to sell them. The total package that was now offered for sale had cost Hervey Parke about \$100,000 in the 1890's. At a great sacrifice, the bank was now asking \$11,500.

About this same time, there were two gentlemen who had a happenstance introduction around a campfire in Yellowstone Park. The younger of the two men was an ambitious fellow from San Diego by the name of Ed Fletcher. Fletcher, 30 years old, wanted to purchase the ranches of Hervey Parke's estate. He knew the asking price of \$11,500 was just a fraction of the property's real value. Unfortunately, Fletcher didn't have the money to make the purchase.

The older gentleman at the Yellowstone campfire was a man named William Gross, a successful actor from the east coast. Gross mentioned to Fletcher he was searching for some sort of investment that would keep him busy during his upcoming retirement. Fletcher wasted no time in explaining the virtues of San Diego and invited his newfound friend for a visit. Bill Gross readily accepted.

Fletcher recounted in his Memoirs:

"During Gross' visit, I took him on a three-day trip to San Diego's back country in a horse and

See **HISTORY** on page 7



Water Conservation Garden Happenings

Any day is the perfect day to stroll through the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College, but springtime is particularly magical. We are so fortunate to have this wonderful resource in our area. If you want to know what will thrive in our micro-climate, check out their landscape of lush, water-wise plantings.

"Urban Farming" is this year's theme for the 20th Annual Spring Garden Festival on Saturday, April 27th (9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.). Free admission and parking! Demonstrations on raising urban chickens, beekeeping, and making cheese at home will be part of the fun. Shop the College's biggest plant sale of the year, and visit the Garden for a book signing with native plant expert, Greg Rubin. Animal encounters, face painting, and the Rancho San Diego Farmer's Market make this an event with something for everyone. Visit www.thegarden.org/springfest for the complete program.

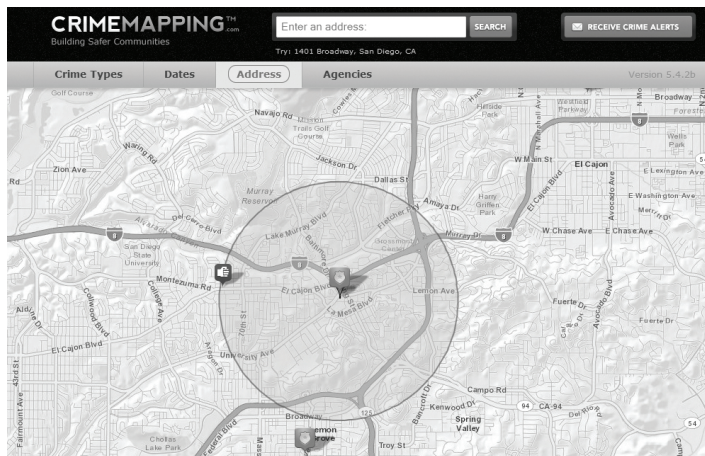
The Garden offers informative free or low cost classes about a variety of subjects. A calendar of classes may be found on their website. Here are just a few of their current offerings:

- ◆ Saturday, May 4th (10 a.m. ~ 12 noon) Marvelous Monarchs
- ◆ Saturday, May 11th (10 a.m. ~ 12 noon) Garden Photography
- ◆ Saturday, May 18th (10 a.m. ~ 12 noon) Free Home Compost Workshop

The Water Conservation Garden is located on the campus of Cuyamaca College, 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, CA 92019. Contact them at (619) 660-0614, ext. 10 or www.thegarden.org. ▲



Alta Ranch (pond is today behind Anthony's Fish Grotto on Murray Dr.)



Get Local Crime Information

Crimemapping.com is a useful website dedicated to helping law enforcement provide the public with valuable information about recent crime activity by neighborhood. This free service tracks auto thefts, home burglaries, drug violations, etc. When you visit the website, you can also sign up for free email alerts for your neighborhood (up to a two mile radius).

GMIA member Bob Perry tells us, "These reports are of interest in that I can detect if there is a problem in my immediate neighborhood. At best they are reassuring that not much is happening close to me. Still, there are as many as eight incidents some days; some days only one or two on the fringes of that two mile radius. It's simple, free and interesting." Thanks Bob, for telling us about this informative free service. ▲

San Diego County Crime

A preview of SANDAG's report on crime statistics (a full report is scheduled for release in April) shows that although San Diego County crime rates climbed last year, they still remain among the lowest in 30 years. GMIA is concerned that this creep upward may be, in part, the result of state law AB 109 that was passed in 2011 to reduce overcrowding in the prison system by shifting low-level inmates in state prisons to county jails. The realignment shifted more than 2,000 inmates into San Diego County; these inmates will be released or paroled in our region. We encourage our members to report all criminal activity and to take part in neighborhood watch programs. A phone/email neighborhood alert system can be a powerful tool to prevent crime. ▲

Mail Theft Update and Solutions

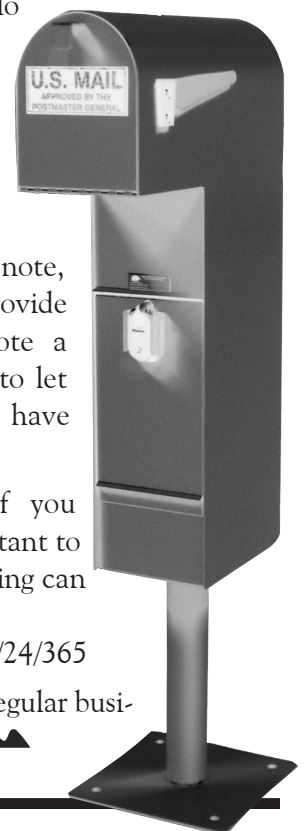
GMIA member Rob Moore emailed to let us know that he recently moved into the area and had never lived in a home with a remote mailbox. He was contemplating leaving it unlocked until he read our article (Viewpoints, Winter 2013) about mail theft. He writes, "I owe you a debt of gratitude as my LOCKED mailbox was pried open on Thursday night, February 21st. Thanks to your article, I knew just what to do, so I called the Sheriff and contacted the Postal Inspection Service. After speaking with my neighbors, I understand it's quite common and seems to come in waves."

In this era of identity theft, what can homeowners do to protect their mail? Rob discovered that his locked mailbox was not a deterrent. We have noticed that some residents have installed the Armadillo Mailbox. Made in America and distributed locally in Escondido, this uniquely designed locking mail box protects mail from thieves, vandals, and the weather. The 14 gauge steel housing appears to be impenetrable yet does not require the mail carrier to have a key. It accepts magazines and packages plus stores mail while you are away. The downside? Cost of the Armadillo Mailbox is \$349 and the stand an additional \$49. However, when weighed against the potential cost of mail theft, this may be a bargain. For more information about this product, check out www.alliedpostal.com. Please note, the purpose of this article is to provide information and not to promote a product. We welcome members to let us know of other solutions they have found to combat mail theft.

Members, please remember, if you experience mail theft: it is important to "Report Every Instance." Reporting can be done online at:

<https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/24/365>

or by calling their offices during regular business hours at 1-877-876-2455. ▲



Who Wants an Owl Box?

by Tom Huffman

Many of us in our community have the following in common: we own large lots, we have frequent problems with rodents, and we enjoy seeing wildlife in our yards. Installing an owl box in your yard could be just the ticket for adding something unique and fun to your yard and your life!

Gerald Darnell, a local resident, builds and sells cedar owl boxes. According to Gerald, "Barn owls can consume up to 1,200 rodents each year and it is not uncommon for owl boxes that are properly installed to result in successful residency by a pair of barn owls, or perhaps a pair of screech owls – a smaller species of owl also found in our area." Gerald also makes an owl box with a camera enclosure so that you can observe the hatching and raising of chicks in the box.

You can also build your own owl box by consulting articles available on the internet. Installing an owl box is not a guarantee that owls will move in. The placement of the



box is important so that predators do not interfere with the nest. Some experts say that placement on a 15-foot 4x4 pole is best, while others argue that placement in a tall tree also works.

Look for Gerald and his owl boxes at the Garden Tour in May! You may also check out his designs at: www.customowlboxes.com, or call him at 619-467-5600 for more information. ▲

In Appreciation

Our annual Garden Tour is made possible by the efforts of your entire GMIA Board of Directors and community volunteers. Our brilliant garden descriptions are written by Director Pat Ryan whose vivid prose can evoke the fragrance of blossoms wafting from the page. Gardeners extraordinaire Directors Don Newcom and Holly Yarris lend a hand with committee support. Director Sue Creveling graciously serves as our Volunteer Coordinator.

A special thank you to Director Jeff Rule, who skillfully oversees our event as Garden Tour Curator. Jeff secures the gardens, coordinates efforts leading to the day of the event, procures our event permit, manages logistics and signage, and expertly handles all the myriad details that make the Tour so special. Thank you to all! ▲

From Jeff Rule Garden Tour Curator

Thank you to all our GMIA members who will participate in a safe and memorable Garden Tour. Please be aware: our traffic barricades, no parking signs and parking recommendation signs must ensure that emergency vehicles will have clearance at all times. County regulations require 16' of clearance (think big fire truck width) in order to safely pass parked vehicles. This is why, in most cases, we allow parking on only one side of the road. You are welcome to drop off passengers in front of the garden property entrance before driving to find suitable parking. Please be sure to leave 16' clearance for emergency vehicles and do not block driveways. Thanks for slowing down on our narrow, winding roads and parking in the recommended areas. ▲

Two Organizations Serve Our Community

Two organizations serve our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. Here's a brief synopsis of the two groups and their unique functions: The mission of the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of our neighborhood, and to foster pride in the community. We are a nonprofit public benefit membership organization founded in 1938. GMIA is led by an all-volunteer board. The Mt. Helix Park Foundation, founded in 1999, is responsible for the Park, amphitheater and cross memorial on top of Mt. Helix. The Park Foundation's staff includes Executive Director Tracey Stotz (www.mthelixpark.org).



WATER-WISE GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX HOMEOWNER

Check Out Our Archives for Water-Wise Info

Past editions of this newsletter are available online at www.gmia.net. Helpful articles for water-wise homeowners are archived for your reference. Here is an index of articles that may be of interest:

Winter 2013Rebates Available for Turf Replacement

Fall 2012Smart Controllers Help Conserve Water

Summer 2012Efficient Irrigation Sprinklers

Winter 2012Subsurface (Drip) Irrigation

Fall 2011The Scoop on Digging a Residential Well

Summer 2011Preventing Pool Water Evaporation

Winter 2011Drought Tolerant Plants

Fall 2010Mulch from Miramar Landfill

We invite you to let us know about other water-saving tips to pass on to our readers. ▲

HISTORY from page 4

buggy. We were returning home on the last afternoon when he volunteered that he had quite a lot of money saved up and would like to come to San Diego to live someday.

It so happened that the Villa Caro Rancho of several hundred acres including what is now Grossmont, also a beautiful home in El Cajon valley at the foot of Grossmont was for sale cheap. The price of \$11,500 cash included the home and its furniture, all of which had cost the owner \$85,000 five years before. At one time, the First National Bank of Chicago had a mortgage on the property of \$125,000, according to records.

It included 40 acres of oranges and lemons; it had not been irrigated for months and was badly neglected. As they were passing the property, I showed it to him. The house and grounds were most attractive and he fell in love with the place immediately. When I told him the price, he said, 'let's buy it.'

Gross' position in the financial arrangement made Fletcher's dream possible at a time when almost everyone agreed that the idea of developing the "useless" hillside land was ridiculous. Thus, in recognition of his help, the mountain was named Mount Gross. When the first subdivision was filed in 1906 the name was changed to Grossmont. ▲



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To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the renewal date of your membership. Note: if the date is June 2013 or later, your dues are paid in full. Thank you! Annual membership is just \$18. You may renew online at our secure website www.gmia.net or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

