



## BILLY MILLS' PATH TO OLYMPIC GOLD BEGAN IN CULVER CITY

BY TOM MILLS



In 1964, after overcoming painful shin splints earlier in the year, the Olympic dreams of Billy Mills were in the balance as July 26 approached, the day of the West Coast USA Olympic Trials in Culver City. Contenders would run the course of the Western Hemisphere Marathon held each December. This historic marathon was the second



LEFT: Billy Mills crosses the finish line, marking a stunning upset in the 1964 Olympics.

TOP: Patricia and Billy Mills in Tokyo, 1964.

oldest in the nation (only the Boston Marathon was older), and the treasured event of our city.

Mills knew that he would need to place first or second to make the strong USA team. Despite dealing with the challenges of Type 2 Diabetes, he stayed hydrated throughout the marathon and placed second, cashing his ticket for the Tokyo Games! Later in September, Mills again finished second in the 10,000-meter Olympic Trials!

The rest is Olympian history. On October 14, during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Mills shocked the world with his sprint kick in the last 100 meters of the 10,000-meter race, passing Ron Clarke and leader Mohamed Gammoudi. Billy Mills' winning time was 28.24.4 seconds!

Mills said, "my success on the Culver City marathon course provided me with the confidence I needed at that point in time before the Tokyo Olympics' 10,000-meter race."

For the first time since famed Native American Olympian Jim Thorpe

*continued on inside page* →

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & PROGRAM



**Freemasonry in Culver City:  
A Not-So-Secret History  
Culver City Lodge  
9635 Venice Boulevard  
Tuesday, January 27 @ 7PM**

In early Culver City history, civic organizations helped to shape the city infrastructure and strengthen bonds between residents and with other communities. The Freemasons Lodge, known as Culver City Foshay Lodge No. 467, was there from the beginning, and one of its earliest members was Harry Culver. With a strong

tradition of charitable works, the lodge members continue to aid the community as they have for decades through health fairs, soup kitchens, weekly open-house brunches, and other events. This presentation will be held at the Culver City Lodge on Venice Boulevard. Learn more about the fascinating and not-so-secret history of freemasonry in Culver City and experience the inner sanctum of a Freemason Lodge.

*This event is free to the public. Please note that this event will not be held in the Multipurpose Room, but instead will be held at the Culver City Freemasons Lodge.*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As 2025 comes to an end and 2026 begins, I feel compelled to reflect on the important storytelling and preservation work we do here at Culver City Historical Society. Every year, we get the chance to recommit to the work that binds us all together. Moving forward, we will continue to preserve, celebrate, and share the story of our beautiful hometown of Culver City, California.

Our history is more than dates, artifacts, and archives. It is the story of people – the innovators, leaders, dreamers, families, filmmakers, builders, educators, and neighbors. They have all combined to shape Culver City into the vibrant, creative, and amazing place it is today. By protecting their legacy, we honor not only the past, but the values that continue to inspire us: curiosity, inclusivity, service, and a belief in the power of community.

In the year ahead, we have the opportunity to increase our impact and visibility in the community, whether it's expanding access to our Museum, offering interesting programming, strengthening partnerships, or inviting new voices into the conversation. We must continue to work hard to ensure our collection remains intact and accessible for generations to come.

As we step into this new year together, I invite each of you to reconnect with what brought you to the Historical Society in the first place: whether it was a love of local history, a desire to give back, or simply a sense of belonging.

In addition, I would like to thank our officers, staff, volunteers, and our interns for all the hard work you do all throughout the year. Thank you for your dedication and your belief in the work we do. I would also like to thank our members. Without your support, we would not be able to complete the work that allows Culver City Historical Society to be a meaningful organization.

May this new year bring you joy, peace, and happiness. Together, we will continue to honor Culver City's past while building an even brighter tomorrow.

Best of luck in 2026!

— Jack Bommarito

## A VERY FOND FAREWELL TO CITY MANAGER JOHN NACHBAR



City Manager John Nachbar, who has served Culver City with distinction for the past 15 years and dedicated 46 years to a career of public service, will be retiring in December. His many years of leadership and insight have allowed our community to thrive. Culver City is grateful for his lasting legacy, and we wish John a relaxing and rewarding retirement!

## OUR MISSION

The Culver City Historical Society was created for the purpose of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the history, cultural, and civic accomplishments of Culver City and its environs.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Roger Garland

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Jack Bommarito ..... President  
Hope M. Parrish ..... President Emeritus  
Mark Morris ..... VP Programs/Media Archives  
Maureen Fleming ..... VP Museum  
Currently Vacant ..... VP Development  
Mara Bommarito ..... Secretary  
Carolyn Wispe Burns ..... Treasurer  
Michael Laase ..... Parliamentarian  
Jeanne Conklin ..... Membership Chair  
Beverly Peterson ..... Membership Co-Chair  
Valerie Meyer ..... Costumes Chair  
Ron Peterson ..... In-House Photographer  
Anissa Di Vincente ..... Webmaster  
Michael Chiabaudo ..... Photo Archives  
Hope M. Parrish ..... Historic Sites Chair  
Andrew Weissman ..... Government Liaison  
Holly Strother ..... Newsletter Designer

## ARCHIVE/RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS

Hope M. Parrish, Tami Eskridge,  
Jeanne Conklin, Michael Potterton,  
Dana Benton, Dennis Parrish,  
Joshua Insel, Kate Ni, Steve Newton,  
James Kislingbury, Prema Reyes  
and Conner Emery

## INTERNS

Sophia Vegas, Samanta Pandey,  
Hailey Garcia, Josiah Joya  
and Cole Fekert

## SEEN AROUND TOWN



ABOVE: President Jack Bommarito and Mara Bommarito enjoy a selfie with the city's new mayor, Freddie Puza.



ABOVE: CCHS President Jack Bommarito and docent Cole Fekert take a moment for a photo op with Harry during the Culver City Walk & Rollers walking tour. Thank you Jim Shanman for letting us share the day with you!

## PAST PROGRAM



Film Historian Marc Wanamaker (left) proudly displays his autographed book by author Julian David Stone (center) after his presentation on the history of MGM and Universal monster movies. President Jack Bommarito is on the right.

Monsters of Universal & MGM:  
A History of Horror Movies  
[bit.ly/43axT7K](https://bit.ly/43axT7K)

## HAPPY NEW YEAR, CULVER CITY!

★ WISHING YOU A ★  
WONDERFUL 2026! ★

FROM ALL OF US AT THE  
CULVER CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## MARK'S CHOICE

History Legends & Lore:  
An Interview with Ethel Ashby

Ethel talks with host Julie Lugo Cerra about living in Culver City during the 1930s.

[bit.ly/4iU2fC5](https://bit.ly/4iU2fC5)

## COSTUMES IN THE BUILDING



Have you seen me onscreen? We need help with another unidentified dress from our MGM collection. This is a navy blue wool full-length dress with a fitted bodice and buttons down the front. It features a high neck and puff sleeves with velvet trim at the wrist. The same trim detail runs down the front bodice along both sides, as well as circling the bottom of the full-length skirt. If you see this dress in an MGM film, please contact Valerie at: [info@culvercityhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@culvercityhistoricalsociety.org)

→ **Billy Mills** continued from front page

earned gold in 1912, a Native American again won gold, as Mills was a member of the Oglala Lakota Sioux tribe.

To say that Mills' historic victory was an upset is an understatement! At that time, Ron Clarke was considered unbeatable. Mills' last-minute surge to pass both runners just before the finish line is still regarded as one of the greatest upsets in Olympic history.

In the lead-up to the 1984 LA Olympics, Disney released the story of Billy Mills' Olympic and personal triumph in *Running Brave*, a movie starring Robby Benson. Following the 1984 Olympics, Billy founded the nonprofit organization Running Strong for American Indian Youth. The organization helps Native American communities with self-sufficiency programs, cultural identity projects and youth activities. Mills is now in his 41st year serving as the organization's national spokesperson, and is still going at 87 years of age.

In recognition of his contributions

to Native Americans, Mills was honored in 2012 with the Presidential Citizens Medal, the highest civilian award, presented by President Barack Obama. Ten years earlier in 2002, Hall of Fame triple jumper Willie Banks and I decided to honor 20 of America's greatest Team USA Olympians, and Billy Mills is included in this series.

Culver City had a unique role in the 1932 and 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Local Helms Bakery became an invaluable supplier during the 1932 Games, and the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee's (LAOOC) official headquarters were at Washington Blvd. near Lincoln, where Costco stands today.

One of the greatest moments of the Olympics is when a new hero emerges with an amazing performance. In an instant, years of difficult and arduous preparations pay off to become that once-in-a-lifetime Olympic experience. I'm looking forward to Culver City being a part of athletes' upcoming Olympic experience once again!

## SPOTLIGHT



"History is fun," our past Historian Julie Lugo Cerra used to say. An email we received back in July from Kevin Simone was a fun one! He shared with us a little history about his late mother Dorothy Tuttle Nitch, a contract dancer for MGM and other studios during the Golden Age of Hollywood. Kevin and his family started a Facebook page about Dorothy in order to preserve her professional legacy.

After posting an image of Dorothy from *Meet me in St. Louis*, Enrique, a Facebook follower, commented that we were in possession of the dress Dorothy is wearing in this photo. Sure enough, Enrique was right! This dress is part of the Historical Society's permanent collection. Excited, Valerie updated Kevin on our plan to display Dorothy's dress during November and December. Thank you, Kevin, for reaching out and sharing your mother's history!

## IN MEMORIAM



Sophie Petrelli



Cathy Zermeño

On August 28, Sophie Petrelli passed away at the age of 88.

Sophie made her mark on Culver City! George Petrelli Steakhouse, a beloved family-run institution serving the community for decades, was established by Sophie and husband George. According to daughter Marie, Sophie "worked tirelessly from 10 in the morning until 10 at night. She gave her energy, her love, and her time, and in doing so, she showed us all what resilience, sacrifice, and dedication truly look like."

You were one of a kind, Sophie. Thank you for your friendship and kindness for so many years. You are missed every day.

On November 16, Catherine "Cathy" Zermeño, a lifelong Culver City resident, passed away at the age of 99.

Born August 21, 1926, Cathy grew up in Los Angeles and married her husband, George Zermeño, in 1944. They settled in Culver City where they raised their children, Christopher and Melissa. Together they built a life of love, laughter, and deep community service.

For more than four decades, Cathy dedicated herself to the people and programs of Culver City. She was recognized for her service, including being named Citizen of the Year and receiving commendations from the Culver City Council for her leadership and community contributions. Cathy's civic pride extended to preserving the city's heritage – she played a key role in caring for and cataloguing historic MGM costumes that are now part of Culver City's cultural archive.

Her kindness and service leave an enduring mark on the city she dearly loved.

# YOU ASKED!

As your City Historian, I received many questions this past year. One that I want to share as we approach our new year is *Didn't we do a Centennial Time Capsule? Where is it buried?*

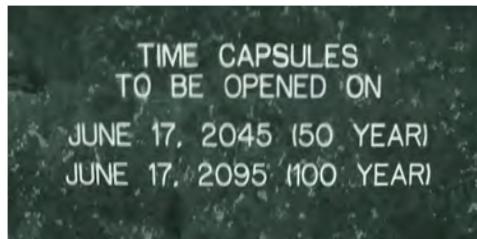
In 2016, during Jim Clark's time as Mayor, we were in preparation for our yearlong celebration of our City's 100th year of incorporation. Committees and subcommittees were formed to coordinate the many activities, parades and a wonderful gala held at Sony Studios.

The *Culver City Observer* writes: "As part of the Centennial Committee, a Time Capsule sub-committee was created, chaired by Marcus G. Tiggs. While the sub-committee continues to work out logistic details for the Time Capsule, we look to you, the citizens of Culver City, for ideas of what to include in the Time Capsule! Think big! Think small! Think outside

the box! No idea is too silly or crazy. The important thing is that the Time Capsule is representative of all and of what's great about Culver City and its residents!"

I suspected the Time Capsule might be buried at City Hall, so I asked City Manager John Nachbar. He confirmed treasures are indeed buried in a concrete vault there. (I have been sworn to secrecy on the coordinates!) The capsule will be dug up and reopened June 17, 2045 during our 150th anniversary. I hope I am still around to see this!

— Hope M. Parrish



LEFT: The stolen Historic Site #10 marker  
TOP: The original school, built in the 1860s  
BOTTOM: The school, rebuilt in the 1920s

# WHERE AM I?

I came across this photo and it made me smile! When I was a little girl from about 1966-1976, I walked past this neighborhood beauty shop, Samilu Coiffures, every day on my way to school. The building is still there but mostly hidden from view. Do you know where I am?



see answer in photo below ↓



Farragut & Overland

## LA BALLONA SCHOOL PLAQUE REPLACEMENT

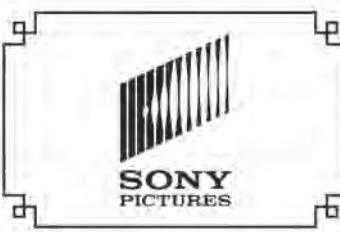
This year, I am thrilled to say that we will finally be replacing the marker stolen from the La Ballona School in 2023.

As many of you may remember, we had a rash of bronzes stolen from the Veterans Memorial Building, and thieves also took this one. Thanks to your continued memberships and donations, we will be able to replace the La Ballona School plaque in 2026.

With your help, we hope to replace the one stolen from Veterans Memorial Building later in 2026.



## WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE GENEROSITY OF





P.O. Box 1356  
Culver City, CA 90232  
info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org  
(310) 253-6941

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### ARC OPEN SUNDAYS

1ST, 2ND, 3RD & 4TH SUNDAYS; 12-3PM  
December-March

### JANUARY 27

CCHS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & PROGRAM  
7pm; Freemason's Lodge

### MARCH 5-15

AVPA: "HADESTOWN"  
March 5-7, 12-14: 7pm; March 8 & 15: 2pm  
Robert Frost Auditorium

### MARCH 29

CULVER CITY SMALL BOOK FAIR  
10am-4pm, Wende Museum

These fine Culver City area businesses support our work to preserve Culver City history for future generations. Show your support by your patronage of their services and products.

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#### RENEW OR BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CULVER CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TODAY!

Preserve the "Heart of Screenland" history – support the Culver City Historical Society Archives and Resource Center (ARC). We can't do it without you!

NEW MEMBER     RENEWAL

Name/Company \_\_\_\_\_

- Benefactor (\$1,000+)
- Corporate Sponsor (\$500)
- Family Lifetime Member (\$500)
- Individual Lifetime Member (\$300)
- Patron Member (\$100)
- Business Member (\$50)
- Family Member (\$35)
- Individual Member (\$25)
- Non Profit Organization (\$15)
- Youth Member (\$10)

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Voluntary Contribution to Museum Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Voluntary Contribution to Julie Lugo Cerra Scholarship Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate membership type and enclose your check payable to:  
The Culver City Historical Society, P.O. Box 1356, Culver City, CA 90232

Or join online at [CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org/membership](http://CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org/membership)

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