



# NEWS

Volume 37, No. 1. Winter 2016



Syd Kronenthal and elected officials at the naming of Kronenthal Park in 1992.

## In Appreciation: Syd Kronenthal

Syd Kronenthal died on October 18, 2015, at the age of 92. He grew up in Chicago and originally planned to become a doctor, but his studies were interrupted when he joined the Army Air Corps during World War II. He came to Culver City in 1946 and joined the Parks and Recreation Department, which he eventually led for 52 years. During his tenure, he helped to establish several parks, "The Plunge," drafted a bond measure that passed to build the Veterans Memorial Building, created numerous recreational and cultural programs for children and adults, and played Santa Claus many times. He was often called "Uncle Syd" by many because he knew so many residents and their families by name.

Syd cherished Culver City's history, was a founding member and helped establish the Culver City Historical Society. Even before the Society was created in 1980, he was the one who realized the significance of accepting 70 costumes from MGM on behalf of the city and he supported the Society's role as caretaker for them. Cathy Zermeno, the Society's first president, remembers how Syd arranged for her to go to the old City Hall in the late 1970s where the costumes were stored so she could work on them. "Syd was very proud of those costumes and he introduced me to VIPS that would help me promote the new historical society once it was established," she said. Without his help, Culver City would not have this unique collection of film costumes worn by such stars as Lucille Ball, Doris Day, Gene Kelly, Lana Turner, Esther Williams, and many others.

One of Syd's most memorable moments was in 1992 when the former McManus Park in east Culver City was renamed Kronenthal Park in his honor (see photo above). He was a truly remarkable man whose legacy will live on in Culver City for years to come. Farewell, "Uncle Syd."

## January 20, 2016 General Meeting Installation of Officers

The Culver City Historical Society's Winter General Membership Meeting will be an Installation Reception held on Wednesday, January 20, 2016, from 7:00 to 8:30 pm in the Lethbridge Garden Room of Veterans Memorial Building. This will be the installation of Michelle Bernardin's second term as President and the 2016-2018 Board, as well as a thank-you to the outgoing Board and Committee chairs. The board slate is as follows:

Michelle Bernardin, President  
Stu Freeman, Immediate Past President  
Janet Chabola, VP Development  
Ellen and Arthur Litman, co-VP Museum/Archives  
Hope Parrish, VP Programs  
Adrienne Bernardin, Secretary  
Tami Eskridge, Treasurer

The Installing Officer will be the Chair of Culver City Planning Commission, Kevin Lachoff.

Seating is limited and reservations are a must for the hors d'oeuvres reception. The price is \$25/member; \$30/non-member. Use the enclosed reservation form to send a check (payable to CCHS) to the Culver City Historical Society (address info on the back of this newsletter) no later than Friday, January 15, 2016. Reservations must be pre-paid.

## 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.

### Acting Newsletter Editor

Joy Jacobs

### OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Michelle Bernardin, President  
Stu Freeman, Immediate Past President  
Tami Eskridge, VP, Development  
Julie Lugo Cerra, VP, Museum/ARC  
Hope Parrish, VP, Programs  
Tami Eskridge, Acting Treasurer  
Adrienne Bernardin, Secretary  
Steven J. Rose, Parliamentarian  
Joy Jacobs, Communications Chair  
Sharon Shore, Costumes Chair  
Jeanne Conklin, Historic Sites Chair  
Jeanne Conklin, Membership Chair  
Gerry Sallus, Government Liaison  
Kevin Lachoff, Photographer  
Dave Tavres, Webmaster

### HOW TO CONTACT US

T (310) 253-6941, leave a message  
F (310) 253-6942  
info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org  
P.O. Box 3428  
Culver City, CA 90231-3428

### STAY CONNECTED

CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org  
facebook.com/CulverCityHistoricalSociety  
twitter.com/histofculvrcity

### MEMBERSHIPS

The Culver City Historical Society exists because of the involvement and generosity of people like you. Please help strengthen our voice for preserving Culver City's architectural and cultural heritage by becoming a member.



## Your President's Message

By Michelle Bernardin

Dear Members,

I hope this note finds you and your family enjoying the wonderful delights and scents of the holidays.

Your Historical Society had a busy 2015, and we are constantly looking at ways to increase engagement with our membership. This year, we started the "Conversations" program, once a quarter during our open hours on Sundays. Speakers, such as members Alex King and Chris Wilde, touched on topics from our city's founder to genealogy. We look forward to bringing you more speakers and interesting topics in 2016!

With our Spring newsletter issue, we will be offering an advertising program for our members. Placing an advertisement can enhance your visibility with our membership, and city at large. 500 newsletters are printed each quarter and are widely distributed. Ads (printed in black and white) cost \$150 for 1/6-page (horizontal or vertical, approximately 4-1/2" x 2-3/8"), one ad per issue, and will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Please contact me directly at michelle@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org for questions on ad specifications.

I hope to see you at the installation of new officers on Wednesday evening, January 20. I am looking forward to the next two years. To close, there are no words to properly thank the 2014-16 board. I have truly appreciated the support, encouraging smiles, and individual talents. We have some folks who are rotating off, and new ones joining us in the upcoming term. All of them making lasting footprints with their important contributions, integral to this group's growth, and I am very grateful.

I wish you and your family joy and happiness in the year to come, and as always, thank you for supporting your Culver City Historical Society!

### Please Renew Your Membership!

The envelope in this newsletter will make it convenient for you to send back your membership renewal, which is due in January 2016. If you would rather do this online, please go to our website at [www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org/membership](http://www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org/membership). There, you will be able to pay instantly with your credit card and save a stamp! We count on the support of our members to be able to maintain the Archives, and to continue the promotion and preservation of Culver City history. Your continued support is always greatly appreciated. Thank you!

### In Memoriam

Susan Berg

Syd Kronenthal

Lynda Newton

Marla Osband

Gus Prado



## Notes From Your City Historian

By Julie Lugo Cerra

### Your Archives At Work

Culver City's Veterans Memorial Building (VMB) has been a Culver City cultural resource since it opened 65 years ago at the edge of a 10.95 acre land acquisition, (a portion of the "Exposition Park" development). The surrounding area was officially designated Veterans Memorial Park on August 8, 1949. A \$550,000 bond guaranteed the construction of the building. Original plans promised a "recreational building with a stage, restaurant, film museum, playroom, and large gymnasium." The cornerstone was laid on April 15, 1950.

The Citizen Newspaper reported the cornerstone of the \$450,000 structure was to be laid the following day with a complete history of Culver City and highlights of various civic activities throughout the year. Anticipated attendees at the event included the Council and the Parks Commission.

Plans called for auditorium seating for 2,000, with a "tourist tower" of 122 feet, where one could view "the interior of practically every movie set in the city." A lobby with valuable movie studio curios was promised. The article mentioned that the council had authorized in the past year, slant oil drilling to help defray the costs of the auditorium. The firm of James I. Barnes reportedly submitted the low bid of \$478,000. The municipal pool, "The Plunge," was tentatively scheduled to open the following month.

Locals previewed the Veterans Auditorium on February 2, 1951, at the annual Chamber of Commerce Installation. Four hundred civic and community leaders attended the dinner where Firley Cleveland replaced outgoing president Charles Milliken. The Chamber office occupied the Rotunda Room at that time.

Lt. Governor Goodwin Knight attended the dedication of the VMB on March 9, 1951, with the Gold Star Mothers as guests of honor. The Citizen mentioned the swimming pool as recently completed.

Related news articles reported the upcoming dedication of the Armory, a cooperative effort of the city and state, built at the western edge of the city park.

The often-used Veterans Memorial Building, renovated in 1980, added a stainless steel sculpture by Natalie Krol, which was financed largely by donations. (Look on the tiles for names.)

The renewal included the rounding of the Garden Room (formerly the Tower Restaurant) wall for a mural and a glass wall to the patio.

The VMB entry proudly exhibits markers to remind us of the commitment of our veterans. Rooms carry the names of our sister cities. In front of the Veterans Memorial Building, the City installed a permanent monument to commemorate the Western Hemisphere Marathon.

On December 10, 2011, our Culver City Historical Society marked the VMB as Historic Site #13. Legendary head of Parks and Recreation, Syd Kronenthal, attended.

The Wende Museum now holds a long-term lease to reopen their Cold War Museum in the Armory. With the Culver City Historical Society Archives located nearby in the Veterans Memorial Building, and the Mayme Clayton Library across the street, the area offers wonderful cultural resources.



The Veterans Memorial Building, CCHS Historic Site #13. Note the Tower Restaurant which was located in today's Lethbridge Garden Room. The CCHS Archives, and view from the tower was featured in a Huell Howser episode on Culver City.



## Mark Your Calendar

Jan. 20: Installation of Officers and General Meeting  
Lethbridge Garden Room, VMB 7PM

Apr. 20: General Meeting and Program  
Multi-Purpose Room, VMB 7PM

### ARC OPEN DATES

1st and 3rd Sundays, 1-3PM

January 3  
January 17  
February 7  
February 21  
March 6  
March 20  
April 3  
April 17

**\*Conversations Program: stay tuned!**



PO Box 3428  
Culver City, CA 90231-3428

Top Right - The Society's First Annual Founder's Day Picnic on September 20, held in Veterans Park and was attended by more than 70 Society members and friends who enjoyed a delicious lunch catered by Jim Rodrigues of Santa Maria BBQ, musical entertainment, and lots of good company. (Photo by Kevin Lachoff)

Bottom Left - October 21 General Meeting, the history of the Culver City Police Department was presented with slides and reminiscent comments. Pictured (l to r) are Hope Parrish, VP Programs; Captain Ron Iizuka, Chief Scott Bixby, retired police Lieutenants Frank Augusta, Norman Traub and Tom Kendra; and Dennis Parrish. (Photo by Karim Sahli)

Bottom Right - Culver City Rotary visit the ARC where they were given a tour by Stu Freeman, Julie Lugo Cerra and Deborah Underwood. (Photo by Julie Lugo Cerra)

