



DANA POINT
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

The News *Drogher*

Summer 2020

DPHS Honors Geody and Richard Deffenbaugh for Founders Day



The Dana Point Historical Society's Founders Day Award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the history of Dana Point, and this year's honorees, Geody and Richard Deffenbaugh (left), have also contributed to the Society directly.

Both grew up in California --- Richard Deffenbaugh in Anaheim and Geody in La Mirada. Richard's first experience with Dana Point was in 1962 as a teenager when he came here to surf. They met at a party and married on July 7, 1969 (right). Richard's father

worked for the Richfield Oil Company, and when a job opening came up at the Richfield Beacon Gas Station in Dana Point, Richard and Geody began their business lives in the area. Their first home was in one of the historic apartments close to the business on Pacific Coast Highway.

When they arrived in town in 1969, the population of Dana Point, Capistrano Beach and San Juan Capistrano combined was 4,000 inhabitants. The Deffenbaughs remember the era: All stores were closed on Sunday except for gas stations; El Toro was strictly Leisure World and a Marine Base; Mission Viejo was only in the planning stage and the area surrounding Dana Point was largely farmland and orange groves. There was no harbor, though dredging had begun. The entrance to Doheny State Park was across the street from their gas station. Greyhound buses, a popular means of transportation then, stopped right outside their station. The Richfield Tower was a landmark for planes and ships. The family doctor (Dr. Pine) made house calls, and you could buy a home on Beach Road for \$60,000. A phone call to South Laguna was considered long distance, and when the all-volunteer fire department sounded an alarm, you might see men running out of Vic's Market or Mac's Coffee shop as they made their way to the call.

Richfield Oil Company became the Atlantic Richfield Company (better known as ARCO) and by 1985 the company was changing the way its gas stations were to be operated. Auto repair gave way to convenience stores and Geody and Richard's business was one of the first ten to be changed over. Business sharply declined since no one understood what a convenience gas station was.



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DPHS Announces High School Senior Scholarship Recipients

The Dana Point Historical Society has once again chosen two deserving high school seniors headed for college to receive the \$1,000 Doris I. Walker Scholarship and the \$1,000 Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson Scholarship. Turn to page 8 to find out more about who Chair Heidi Hyde and her scholarship committee have chosen for this year's honors!

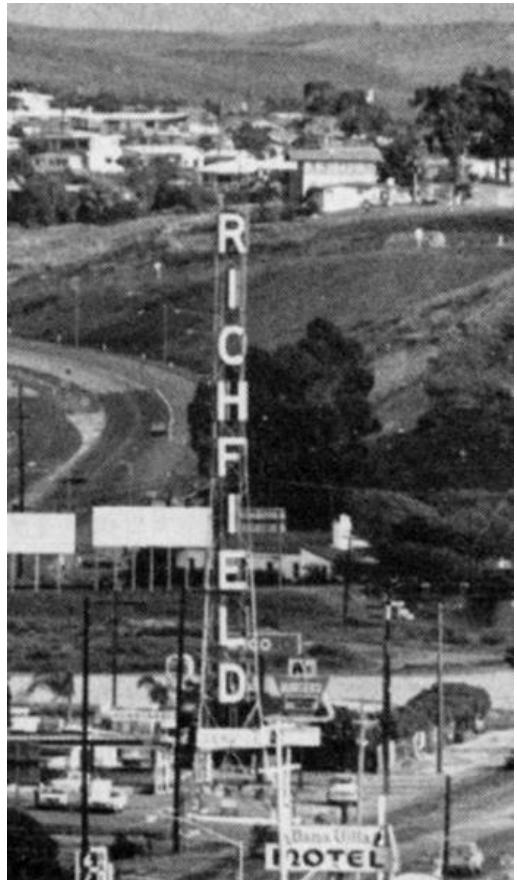
President's Message



We missed meeting with you this spring as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the stay-at-home protocols still in place for future large gatherings. We do want everyone to keep well, yet discover alternative ways to celebrate the places that have preserved Dana Point's history. You may want to consider a walk on the Bluff Top Trail or to Lantern Bay Park or Dana Point Harbor for active recreation. Have you read the interpretive panels at Waterman's Park commemorating Hobie Alter, local surfing history and the original Richfield Tower on PCH? Now you have time.

May was preservation month, a time to commemorate the people and places that represent our local history. Usually the Society has a gathering in May for our annual Founders Day Award. Although we are unable to celebrate together, this year we are honoring Geody and Richard Deffenbaugh, who have been in business in Dana Point since 1969, as our Founders Day honorees. After a half-century of public interaction, they have interesting stories to share about celebrities they have met and visitors passing through town. Richard had the foresight to retain and preserve the aeronautical and navigation beacon from the original Richfield Tower, where the Deffenbaugh's original business was located. Richard presented it to the Dana Point Historical Society at our January 2014 annual meeting, where it is now an artifact in our permanent collection.

Once again this year, we awarded two \$1,000 scholarships in honor of business woman Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson, founder of *El Patio's Café*, the longest-running restaurant in Dana Point, and in honor of historian/journalist Doris Walker, a founding member of the Historical Society, who researched and authored books on local history. This June, we congratulate the two deserving high school graduates, who, unfortunately, did not have gatherings for their high school Senior Award ceremonies, which is when Society representatives traditionally announce the honors. And sadly, our Society cannot join together to greet them at our annual Scholarship Fiesta Picnic Fundraiser at Doheny State Beach.



Since May was preservation month, now is the perfect time to answer the ongoing questions about two threatened historic buildings and one historic structure in the City of Dana Point. Later in this edition of

the News Drogher, we report about these important places. Few of us will be taking flights or cruising to other countries in the coming months, but we can walk or drive to our own historic resources. Keith and I recently visited the city's Palisades Gazebo Park (pictured left) with its lovely rose garden and enjoyed another walk to the county's Ken Sampson Overview Park, historically known as the Blue Lantern Gazebo. People wore masks and kept their distance, but all were enjoying the beautiful coastal views. You may even want to venture to the Heisler Park gazebo when the City of Laguna Beach opens its parks. Have a great summer and keep well.



Barbara Force Johannes



Richard responded by opening an auto repair shop next door (pictured left) and persuaded Geody to help run the AM/PM market "only for six months." Geody ended up running the AM/PM for 27 years until they sold it in 2009.

Geody and Richard raised two children. Son Darren and daughter Janae (pictured right) attended local schools and went to college at UCLA. Darren and his family live in North Carolina and Janae and family in Boca Raton, Florida. While raising their children, Geody was on



the PTA Board and a Room Mother at Del Obispo Elementary school. She helped raise funds for many field trips the school district did not cover. Geody was also involved at South Coast Laguna Beach Hospital Auxiliary as President of the OB and Pediatric section. She helped organize many fashion shows to raise funds for the support of young mothers.

Geody was always a "Team Mom" and score keeper for the children's many sports activities, raising funds for trips as far away as Hawaii for tournaments. Richard was a board member of Del Obispo Boys Baseball, Capo Valley Girls Softball and Capo Valley Boys & Girls Soccer, where he also served as coach and sponsor. The couple were able to persuade SDG&E to put up lights at the Del Obispo baseball fields and, after a lengthy battle, to cajole Pacific Bell to place a telephone booth at the field. Prior to the installation of the telephone, if a child was injured, it was necessary to drive to the gas station to call an ambulance or drive directly to South Coast Hospital.



Richard has been a member of the Dana Point Chamber of Commerce Board since 1971 --- 49 years --- and is the longest-standing member of the Chamber. He has served on the Board since 2013 and has participated on the Ambassador, Membership and Education Committees. In 2013, the Chamber named the Deffenbaughs' Dana Point Auto Service as Business of the Year.

Richard is an invaluable member of the Chamber's Education Committee, personally championing the funds raised for Dana Hills High School and increasing the scholarships awarded to deserving students. In 2019, the Chamber Board voted to rename its annual student award to the *Richard Deffenbaugh Scholarship*. Richard also served on the Dana Point Optimist Club for ten years, serving as Secretary and Vice President.

In 2014, Richard was the guest speaker for the Dana Point Historical Society when he presented the Richfield Tower Beacon on a custom-designed stand (right). The iconic beacon in Dana Point was first erected in 1928 as part of a chain of 36 towers on the West Coast (it was dismantled in 1971). The beacon stands in our museum today.

As members of the Dana Point community, both Geody and Richard Deffenbaugh have illustrated a life-long commitment to our area while pleasantly amassing many stories of local characters as well as well-known legends. Richard knew Hobie Alter and all the watermen and women who frequented the beach and shoreline, in addition to such celebrities as Esther Williams and Fernando Lamas, who stopped at the station to gas up halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego.

The Dana Point Historical Society is proud to honor the Deffenbaughs in 2020. We look forward to hosting an event in the future to publicly thank them and recognize their years of service and commitment to the Dana Point area.

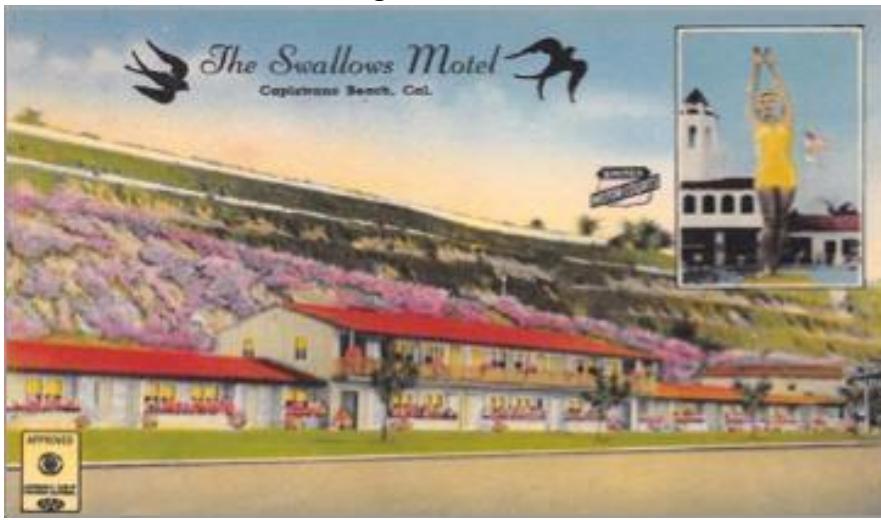


~Elizabeth Bamattre~

Will the Seaside Inn and the Blue Lantern Gazebo Be Saved?

Barbara Force Johannes

As one would expect, whenever our Historical Society volunteers meet the public we receive questions about historic buildings in Dana Point. This was especially true for our volunteers at our outreach booth during the Festival of Whales on March 7th and 8th. Santa Clara Avenue neighbors wanted to know what was being done about the Blue Lantern Gazebo at the Ken Sampson Overlook. Many people asked about the historic Woodruff Real Estate Building on Pacific Coast Highway at Del Prado, between the Streets of the Blue Lantern and Ruby Lantern. Terry Rogers, of San Clemente, and others wanted to know what was being done about the terrible condition of the Seaside Inn on PCH in Capistrano Beach. So, in the spirit of preservation, here is some of what we know about three endangered historic structures of our treasured heritage.



This postcard (left) of the Swallows Motel in Capistrano Beach, c. 1940, is featured in the January 2016 Dana Point Historic Resources Inventory Update by Architectural Resource Group. The reverse side of the postcard reads: *On U.S. 101 (8 miles So. of Laguna Beach – halfway between L. A. and San Diego) 30 New attractively furnished units, all with tile bath, radios and private garage. Each unit overlooking the Broad Pacific. Fishing pier directly in front. Greyhound bus stop and restaurants nearby. Guests*

have access to beach and plunge. Phone: Dana Point 796. Restored in 1978 as the Capistrano Country Bay Inn, it continued to advertise in the Los Angeles Times in 1988 "... as a bed-and-breakfast establishment originally built in the 1930s on the Doheny estate." The Swallows Motel (now the Seaside Inn) is the last of the local motor inns built in Dana Point midway between Los Angeles and San Diego, around the time of World War II. The earlier 1930 Dana Villa Motel, located across from the Richfield Tower, and the 1945 Plantation Motel on PCH have been demolished. The 1946-47 Dana Point Hotel on Del Prado Avenue (now Jack's Restaurant) is approved to be demolished in the near future. Former Country Bay Inn employee Terry Rogers is especially concerned because his mother, Gloria Rogers of Beach Road Realty, "saved the Swallows Inn back in the 1970s when it was in worse shape than it is now." Rogers said Gloria persuaded Merv Phelan, who lived on Beach Road, to purchase the inn and finance the renovation that Gloria managed from her realty office in the motel. A 1988 advertisement stated: *Each room at the County Bay Inn has been redecorated with antique furnishings and collectibles. Ocean views, fireplaces and patios highlight the rooms. And each room has a wet bar, color TV and direct-dial phone. Most have a refrigerator and guests receive champagne and candy.* Gloria invited author Norman Simpson of *Country Inns and Back Roads* to visit and the Capistrano County Bay Inn was approved for his guide. Guests had a continental breakfast of croissants, jams, juices and coffee or tea served in the rooms. Terry knows this because he worked there. Pierre's intimate French restaurant was also on the site. Pop band members who played at the Miramar Theater (c. 1978-84) stayed there along with San Onofre engineers, who received mid-week rates. Some well-known actors and musicians had extended stays there including June Lockhart, Dean Stockwell and Jerry Lee Lewis. When guests arrived by train they were met by one of Merv Phelan's antique cars, which he kept in the inn's garages. The Country Bay Inn was later sold and the new owners changed the name to Capistrano Seaside Inn.



In recent years the Seaside Inn has received poor reviews, even listed as one of Yelp's 10 worst motels in the U. S. The City of Dana Point red-tagged the Seaside Inn on September 1, 2016. *The Dana Point Times* reported that Mark Adams of the California Receivership Group (CRG) was appointed to take possession of the historic building sometime in April 2018 because of their experience restoring historic hotels. CRG secured the property, built a retaining wall behind the property and worked on rehabilitation construction plans.

The Sunshine Group LLC owner(s) filed for

bankruptcy in 2019, according to Ashley Ludwig of the *Laguna Niguel-Dana Point Patch*, on February 21, 2020. The photo taken on May 13, 2020 (above) shows the Seaside Inn boarded and the fence restored after vandals ripped off boards and damaged the fence. Toni Nelson of *Capo Cares* has led the effort on behalf of Capistrano Beach in advocating for a restored Seaside Inn. The Historical Society supports the City of Dana Point and CRG's efforts along with Terry Roger's belief that the Capistrano Seaside Inn can be restored as it was in 1978 when it was the Capistrano Country Bay Inn.



The “Blue Lantern Gazebo” (left) at the Ken Sampson Overlook Park continues to be fenced off due to a rockslide on January 13, 2018. Cove Road was also closed when 18 tons of rock, including a two-ton boulder, dropped on the stone restrooms below. Cove Road was re-opened but the restrooms below and the gazebo above remain closed and fenced off, although the Ken Sampson Overlook still remains a popular harbor viewing spot.

The *South Coast Scenic Improvement*

Project emphasized the preservation of this historic lookout as a public view point in 1969, as recorded by Doris Walker in *Home Port for Romance*. “The Blue Lantern Lookout Park” was dedicated in 1975 as an official Orange County Park. The historic red-tiled, octagonal gazebo first appears in our historical photos at about the same time as the Blue Lantern Gas Station Fountain Lunch building, c. 1926-1927. The original site may have been chosen by the San Juan Point Corporation or Anna G. Walters in 1925, but the gazebo was likely built sometime after Sidney H. Woodruff’s investors bought and expanded the Dana Point development in 1926. (Historic photos show Woodruff’s tall-ship logo located at the peak of the gazebo’s tiled roof, pictured next page.) The gazebo’s panoramic location also includes the California State Park Commission’s *Historical Landmark No. 189*, erected in 1955, which attests to the significance of Richard Henry Dana’s visit in 1835 and, earlier, Hipólito Bouchard’s raid on San Juan Capistrano, flying an Argentine flag, while anchored here in 1818. On September 21, 1978, the quarter-acre site was renamed the Ken Sampson Overlook to honor the Orange County Parks director who had overseen the design and construction of Dana Point Harbor. A commemorative plaque with Ken Sampson’s portrait is placed in the park in tribute to his supervision of local beaches, harbors and parks.

Orange County Parks engaged Page & Turnbull, a preservation architecture and conservancy firm in Los Angeles, to evaluate the Blue Lantern Gazebo with a historic-structure feasibility study. The study describes the Spanish Colonial Revival structure as located at the edge of the bluff on a concrete foundation added in 1989. The ramp that slopes down to the gazebo entrance was added during the 1973 construction of the new plaza. This was a change to the approach, but the gazebo itself was not moved. The gazebo is a wood-frame construction with large corner wood columns supporting wood rafters, wood skip sheathing and a barrel clay tile roof above. The walls are wood frame construction with cement plaster finish on the exterior and wood on the interior. The gazebo was originally fully enclosed with casement window sashes and partially glazed bi-fold entry doors, as evident in our historic photos. After an Orange County Historical Commission meeting in the harbor, I had the opportunity to meet with architect Drew Gorski at the Blue Lantern Gazebo. He pointed to the original recessed areas where window hinges at the existing wood columns showed that the gazebo was once fully enclosed. In the report submitted by Page & Turnbull, the gazebo's interior cast-in-place floor, featuring a terra cotta compass embedded at the center, was installed with the new foundation in the late 1980s. The terra cotta compass was salvaged from an earlier slab and reinstalled in the current concrete slab. The general condition of the gazebo ranges from poor to good, with the most serious issue



identified as the separation of connections between the columns and beams, where beams no longer have full bearing. Interior wood cladding on walls have damage, the walls have evidence of termite damage, and wood sills have both termite and graffiti damage. Areas of concern included erosion of the bluff, which has the potential to undermine the gazebo foundation, as documented in a *Limited Geotechnical Review* in 2016. The Page & Turnbull report recommended that continuing erosion should be examined by a civil engineer.



The Blue Lantern Gazebo is one of only a handful of remaining historic gazebos built along the Pacific Coast in the 1920s and 1930s. Also still existing is the historic Doheny-era gazebo at the Palisades Gazebo Park in Capistrano Beach. It is open to the sky, with connecting beams instead of a roof. Built-in benches for gazing at the Pacific Ocean are surrounded by a beautiful rose garden. The Heisler Park gazebo (pictured left) is another. It is now a part of Laguna Beach and its greenbelt named a "Historic American Landscape," one of only 700 national landmarks in the entire United States to receive such a recognition.

Page & Turnbull has recommended restoring the historic Blue Lantern Gazebo to its original appearance (rendering pictured right), including the original faux bois fence of wood-

like patterned cement as seen in our historic photos --- a style that still remains at the gazebo in Heisler Park.

As of now, there has been no update as to when this restoration might begin.



Will This Historic Landmark Survive? by Keith Johannes

The Dana Point Historical Society receives many questions about historic buildings and their preservation. Many comments express concern about the building at the up-coast entrance to the Dana Point Commercial District, now called the Lantern District. The first use of the building at the split of Pacific Coast Highway and Del Prado was as the Sidney H. Woodruff Real Estate Tract Office (shown right, c. 1930.) An article in our March 2011 News Drogher shared a similar concern for this building's preservation describing it as "an anchor and key focal point in the visual character of early Dana Point."

There have been many uses for the structure, and we are still researching its history following the dissolution of Woodruff's Dana Point Syndicate in 1939. We know the building was used as a gift store called Coral Island (pictured below), operated by Gretchen Cooper in the 1950s. Cooper's granddaughter, Jane Edelman, and Dana Point businesswoman Tracie Sullivan contacted the Society, who met with them and city officials in 2013 regarding their concerns about the building's condition.

The next use of the building was again for real estate sales --- first



School. Brookside Winery eventually closed but Hofer retains ownership of both buildings.

In the 1980s, research shows that a store called Computers Unlimited used the original Woodruff tract office building for an unknown period of time. Then, in the middle 1990s for about 15 years, it was what many most recently remember as UP Sports, a sporting-goods store. The last use we have on record is as a motor bike store.



The once-prominent Woodruff Tract Office now sits vacant and in need of repair.

Lingo Reality and then Grubb-Ellis by which time the French doors on the west side had been removed. In the 1960s, Paul Hofer bought the structure and opened Brookside Winery. In 1965, an addition was added designed by local architect Lynn Muir. Brookside Winery built a larger building nearby, across Del Prado, which was later leased, most recently as a Montessori



Vandalized decorative fountain with original tile work from the 1930s.

This landmark building at the entrance to our city has languished, empty, for nearly a decade, much of its decorative exterior work damaged by years of exposure to the elements and vandalism, with little maintenance. If you have photos, facts or memories related to this building, please connect with us at <museum@danapointhistorical.org> or leave a message at 949-248-8121.

DANA POINT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 544
DANA POINT CA 92629

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DPHS High School Senior Scholarships Awarded

The Dana Point Historical Society Scholarship Committee has chosen two high school seniors headed for college to receive the Society's \$1,000 scholarships. Chair Heidi Hyde and her committee, consisting of Judy



Henderson, Judy Brandmeier, Fay Kristjanson and Susan Hinman, have awarded the \$1,000 Doris I. Walker Scholarship to Brisa Romero (left) of Dana Point High School. Aside from graduating with Academic Distinction and the California Seal of Bi-Literacy, Brisa excels in soccer and was a member and officer of the community assistance clubs SOS PATHS and the Interact Club of Monarch Beach Sunrise Rotary. Brisa's coaches and teammates also voted that she receive the "Dolphin Award" in her junior and senior years as "an outstanding example of team spirit, leadership, energy, positivity, communication, and taking charge". Brisa will be attending Saddleback College, majoring in kinesiology in pursuit of becoming a physical therapist.

The scholarship committee also awarded the \$1,000 Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson Scholarship to Perla Rodriguez (right) of San Clemente High School. Perla graduates with valedictorian honors and was also awarded the California State Seal of Bi-literacy. Throughout high school, Perla participated in various community service events such as food drives, toy drives and tutoring while maintaining a greater than 4.2 grade point average throughout the four years. Perla was an active member of the SCHS clubs Interact and Fuerza Latinx. Perla will attend UC Irvine.



Membership: Welcome new members: The Weling Family