



# THE LETTER

LAFAYETTE ASSOCIATION OF HOMEOWNERS, INC. NEWSLETTER

DEC 2002-JAN 2003

WWW.THELAFAYETTELB.ORG

ISSUE #28

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## ANNUAL HOMEOWNERS MEETING AND ELECTION OF 2003 BOARD OF DIRECTORS WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2003

5:30PM..... SIGN-IN AND VOTING

6:30PM..... MEETING AND ELECTION RESULTS

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO COME IN PERSON, OR SEND IN YOUR PROXY BALLOT BEFORE JANUARY 8. THE MEETING AND ELECTION MUST BE RESCHEDULED IF THERE IS NO QUORUM OF HOMEOWNERS.**

### PEEK INTO THE PAST

## The Lafayette: A Personal History

*By Gary Johnson*

The Lafayette complex is named for the 1928 hotel on the corner of Linden and Broadway in downtown Long Beach. However, the complex involves two more, taller structures—the Campbell Apartments and a 1940's addition to the hotel.

The Hotel Lafayette was built during the Roaring 20s when Long Beach was touted as a beach playground for the high-rolling and fun-loving tycoons of the times. However, the stock market crash of 1929—just two days before the 215-room hotel's scheduled grand opening—put a damper on the partying and threw the nation into depression. Yet, the art deco hotel managed to remain in business and text from its postcards read: "A hotel of distinction catering to the desires and comforts of the discriminating Guest. Excellent dining rooms. Free parking. Moderate rates prevail."

Meanwhile, a man named Reginald Campbell had acquired the land next door to the hotel on Linden and built a deluxe apartment complex. The 11-story building complied with the 1928 height limitations and featured a sun-room or solarium that looked out over the city. While every room had its own kitchen, the apartments still offered hotel and maid service. A basement garage featured attendants that polished the cars while they were parked.

During the 1930s the City of Long Beach survived because of the money the Navy brought

to town. Since 1919, Long Beach had been a key port on the West Coast and by 1932, it was home for more than 50 U.S. Navy ships. Housing shortages in the city meant that naval officers and their families stayed in rooms at the Lafayette and other posh hotels in town.

Eventually, Campbell bought the Hotel Lafayette to protect his interest in the apartment building. After World War II, Campbell was interested in expanding the hotel and developing its potential. He visited several major hotels throughout the United States to make plans for another addition.

In 1948, an 8-story building facing Broadway was completed, consisting of 100 rooms and featuring the University Club on the top floor, and kitchen and banquet rooms. Reginald Campbell died while the project was in progress, leaving his children to run the hotel for four years.

*See page 3 >*



PHOTO BY JIM BENNETT

**A tableau: residents of the Lafayette gather around the tree during the holiday celebration. (See page 4.)**

THE LAFAYETTE  
CONDOMINIUMS

140 LINDEN AVENUE

LONG BEACH, CA 90802

(562) 436-5391

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

# Max Viltz

By Thea Robertshaw

Village Treasures is an exquisite journey into African art, jewelry, music, exotic old woods and images that touch the very soul. The treasures collected from Africa stretch from the Sub-Saharan to the glory of the Ivory Coast and lures you into the unexplored beauty of West Africa and Egypt as the owner's footsteps trailed all over Africa. Village Treasures is like a small museum that gives you a sense of history so magical that it makes the images of African tales come alive. The masks that leap from the walls, all tell their own story filled with mystique and fascinating African rituals. But there's something more extraordinary than just the store. It's the tall, beautiful black woman. She has an aura of sophistication and independence that turned Village Treasures into one of the hottest new stores in downtown. Max's passion for the arts and her knowledge of African culture inspires her clients to come back time after time. This leaves us wondering what led to Max's love affair with African arts and culture. Where did it all begin? It started in high school. She remembers dating a boy whose mother traced her roots back to Ghana, West Africa. She was a Rosicrucian that introduced Max to metaphysics and concepts she had never heard of before. Their relationship as mentor-student lasted long after Max stopped dating the boyfriend. A new world had opened up for Max after which she pursued Black Studies at Cal State Long Beach.

Being tall, thin, and beautiful Max tried modeling for a while. She wanted something more. "To find out who we are" and "Who I am," she said, and what that meant as things were changing during the civil rights movement. Later she formally studied business administration as she continued to pursue her passion by studying with many artists one on one. She learned what every artifact represented and that everything had a purpose in rituals, ceremonies and day to day life in Africa. Today, her broad knowledge is used to the benefit of her customers as the student has become an excellent teacher. Her life took many turns but not once did she dream of having her own store. She majored in sociology and went to work for the Long Beach Commission on Economic Opportunities. After a few years she realized that job wasn't her future and went to work for McDonnell Douglas, which later became Boeing where she spent the next 32 years of her life. But not once did she give up that which she loved most.

With a full time job Max continued her studies through night school. She said, "The

main thing is that I also kept studying African art." Together with her former husband she continued to pursue her studies in LA which took them on an educational tour to Egypt as part of their studies. It was the beginning of Max's exotic travels across the African continent. They went to Cairo, visited the tomb of Ramses II as well as the monument of Nefertiri, the Valley of the Kings and of course the Cairo Museum to see the artifacts of King Tut's tomb which took a whole day in itself. The island of Phille was important in relating the mythology of Isis, Osirus and Horus. Max learned that the ancient Egyptians were a very advanced society. She was most impressed with their knowledge of astrology, math and science.

Years later, Max and her former husband traveled to West Africa on yet another educational tour. They spent one incredible month traveling through Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo and Benin on the Ivory Coast. They would fly to each country, leave their belongings at a hotel and take trips into the country where they would stay for days at a time visiting various tribes and participate in or observe rituals, ceremonies and celebrations. As typical of African hospitality, people in the villages would come out to greet them by performing drum and dance rituals. "It was a colorful spectacle where I was totally out of context standing with my tape recorder in my hands. I was swept away by the incredible beauty of the African people in a world that left me breathless," Max recalls. "Yet at the same time wanting more as I drank in every moment and carried the memories with me. We walked on beautiful white sand on unspoiled beaches. The markets were so incredible that I don't even have words for it. One of my most moving experiences was to visit the Island of Goree off Senegal which was one of the last holding places for captured Africans before they were shipped off and enslaved. My favorite place is Mali. I fell madly in love with Mali. We

*See next page >*



PHOTO FROM WWW.VILLAGE TREASURESONLINE.COM

**The view from inside: numerous authentic artifacts direct from Africa to your neighborhood.**

THE LAFAYETTE LETTER IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY FROM THE OFFICE OF THE LAFAYETTE ASSOCIATION OF HOMEOWNERS.

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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS THE 21ST OF THE MONTH. AD SPACE AVAILABLE. CONTACT THE OFFICE FOR RATES.

**MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR, CONTINUED**

stayed in a hotel in the city of Bamako that by far could not begin to resemble anything like a hotel. The lobby had large statues carved by the Bamana tribe. They were absolutely awesome. We would pack a bag and take a land cruiser to visit Dogon villages, mostly fishing villages. After several days on a dusty and broken road, we arrived at the Banliadara cliffs." Max showed me their cliff dwellings many stories high in one of her art books. "Their artwork and craftsmanship is very sophisticated," she said. "Even their front door and locks carved out of wood are masterpieces." Dogons were an advanced culture as evidenced by their astrology. Everything they do and make is in honor of their ancestors. And as expected, Max loved their mud cloth and amber jewelry. Max said, "I was in heaven." Her travels are another attribute to her unique style in the way she dresses. Her store carries some of these beautiful textiles and clothing at very affordable prices.

Following her travels, she still hadn't considered opening a store. They did have a cultural center with history, dance and drumming classes along with a gift shop. Max continued to work full-time at Boeing but felt she couldn't do justice to deal with the buying, selling and marketing while doing government contract management for aerospace. Yet there was another world waiting for her.

Not too long ago, Max retired and has moved the African Cultural Center and store to the East Village where you can enjoy the richness and knowledge of her African studies and travels. Next year Max will be embarking on yet another African journey as she travels to explore the glory of Southern Africa. She says of her former husband, "I do need to give Olufemi Viltz credit for the store. He really supported and encouraged me to do this." But it was Max, the independent, resourceful and adventurous woman who created this unique personal vision of Africa. She is our neighbor, part of the Lafayette complex, on the corner of Broadway and Linden.

Village Treasures is located at 146 Linden Ave. Hours are 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Telephone 435-3110 or visit [www.village-treasuresonline.com](http://www.village-treasuresonline.com).

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PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE LAFAYETTE'S GENERAL FUND

**PEEK INTO THE PAST, CONTINUED**

In 1952, the hotel was joined with the Campbell Apartments and sold to Hilton. From 1952 to 1959 the Lafayette ballroom played host to the Miss Universe contests that were broadcast live to stations all over the United States.

In 1968, Hilton turned the building back over to the Campbell family and one year later the building was converted to condos.

In 1978, Dorothy L. Johnson, a close friend to the Campbells, purchased 8 units and let her son live in one to manage the others. After she died, her son's brother and sisters had him sell every unit except his. Today, I'm still here (if I keep remembering to pay the monthly fees!).

I thought my fellow Lafayettians would be interested in this brief historical explanation of how where you are living came to be.

**GOT DIRTY WINDOWS?**

— HAVE SQUEEGEE, WILL TRAVEL —  
VOLUNTEER WINDOW WASHING  
CALL ANDY AT 435-8023

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

## Who's Who at the Lafayette

**2002 Board of Directors**

*President:* Jean-Louis de Bien

*First Vice-President:* Laraine Turner

*Second Vice-President:* Lou Schor

*Treasurer:* Mary Wright

*Secretary:* Andy Blinn

**Office Manager**

Sharon Hays

**Contact the President**

*E-mail:* [LOALB@MSN.COM](mailto:LOALB@MSN.COM)

*Phone:* 432-5295

(Weekdays 8am-9pm, Weekends 9am-9pm )

**Contact the Board**

*In writing:* Each board member has a mailbox in the office. All written comments will be addressed in a timely manner. Or go to "Feedback" on the Lafayette's Website at [www.thelafayettelb.org](http://www.thelafayettelb.org).

*In person:* Come to the board meetings every first and third Wednesday of the month at 7pm in the Solarium. Look for change in schedule notices to be posted in advance.

**Contact the Office**

*Phone:* 436-5391

**Office Hours**

9:30 am to 6:00 pm Weekdays

**Other Useful Numbers**

Platt Security: 986-4484

**FROM THE OFFICE**

## Oh Chute!

Campbell building residents who like to use the mail chute to drop their mail into the mailbox from above, you need to ask yourselves one question: "Do I feel lucky?" Well, do ya? If not, it's probably better to place your mail in the box by the elevator in the lobby directly. Mail has a tendency to get stuck in the chute from time to time. You've been warned.

## Watch Your Step

Sidewalk repair and restoration is underway outside the Lafayette building and will continue into January. Silverlake Conservation is prepping the sidewalk by filling in deep cracks with a special epoxy and quick drying cement. Once the cement has cured for approximately three weeks, the sidewalks will be steam cleaned, the cement will be restained to their original colors of green, red and black and a protective sealant will be applied to the sidewalk.

## Wash Your Stuff

New front-loading washing machines will be installed in January. The price remains the same—\$1 for a wash, 75¢ for a dryer load.

During negotiations, the Board considered the possibility of adding a dollar-bill changer, but Web's advice was that the high risk of theft or damage discouraged that option. The new contract with Web will also help the Lafayette Association pay for electrical upgrades that serve the main laundry room.

## Ballroom Blitz

The Board of Directors is working with the Commercial Property Committee to rent out both ballrooms for one week in mid-January. The Mona Fine room and the Embassy room will be used as alternate exhibit space for two sportswear retailers during the upcoming Imprinted Sportswear Expo at the Convention Center.

## Thank You

Many Lafayette residents (owners and tenants alike) have contributed their time and energy to help improve conditions at the Lafayette this year. We would like to thank each of you for your valued efforts large and small. The more we work together, the better off we all will become, and the Lafayette will be on it's way to reaching its full potential as a unique and exciting place to live. Happy New Year!



Scenes from the 2002 Holiday Party in the main lobby.