

SLCA  
P. O. Box 9668  
South Laguna  
CA 92652-7639



# Bulletin

Fall 2010

*"Dedicated to Protecting the Quality of Community Life"*

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION • BOX 9668, SOUTH LAGUNA, CA 92652 • FOUNDED IN 1946 • VISIT US AT WWW.SOUTHLAGUNA.ORG



*The Halliburton House, just below Aliso Peak, overlooks Aliso Canyon, the golf course, and Aliso Beach*

lots on the crest of the hill. He conceived of building for himself and Mooney a place that would serve as a retreat from his frenetic travels and a base of operations where he could concentrate on writing his books, which had become the main source of his substantial income. Nonetheless, the very nature of what he did kept him in motion, and he delegated oversight of the project to Mooney, who took up residence in the town.

## The Halliburton House

By Scott Sebastian

We have all noticed the unusual concrete structure high on the cliff above Coast Royal and the golf course. Some may know it as the Halliburton House. Who was Halliburton and how did the house come to be constructed there?

Richard Halliburton is not well known today, but in the 1930s he was an international celebrity. Like many celebrities of the era, he visited Laguna Beach, not very often or for very long, for he was in fact a nomad, a compulsive traveler, whose celebrity was largely based on his own accounts of his adventures all over the world. Handsome, sophisticated, self-confident, and endlessly energetic, he sailed, flew, climbed, hiked, and even swam in extraordinary places. He wrote his adventures into books, which soon made him famous.

An avowed romantic, he distrusted the idea of settling down. Nonetheless he built in Laguna Beach one extraordinary house, nicknamed Hangover House, possibly because of its position at the edge of a precipice similar to an overhanging rock where Halliburton nearly fell to his death in his ascent of the Matterhorn. Some of his books are still in print, but for the citizens of South Laguna and Laguna Beach, the house is perhaps his more enduring legacy.

### THE SITE

Halliburton first began to visit Laguna in the early 1930s where he hiked and rode horseback along the coast and up the canyons. In 1933, with Paul Mooney, who was his friend, administrative assistant and editorial collaborator, he found a site, about two thirds of the way up Aliso Peak, that captivated him. The location was extremely difficult to reach even on foot, but the views were incomparable, southward to the Pacific, westward to the Palos Verdes peninsula, and northward up Aliso Canyon to the San Gabriel Mountains. Halliburton purchased several contiguous

### ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

In the 1930s, the upheavals in Europe led to the migration of many prominent artists and architects such as Walter Gropius, Rudolph Schindler, and Richard Neutra, who brought with them a completely new approach to design. They were strongly committed to the use of industrial materials and technologies, to deriving forms directly from functions, to eliminating all ornament, and to rejecting any imitation of the art of earlier eras. They became the leaders of what we now call the Modern Movement. They rapidly came to dominate some of the most prestigious academic design programs and they introduced radical changes into design education. The structural advances of reinforced concrete allowed volumes to appear to float in the air. Entire walls could be made of glass. Roofs were flat and often treated as terraces or developed as gardens. To Americans, the new style was utterly exotic, and it was intended to embody an entirely new way of living and a new relationship to the natural world.

The widely travelled and sophisticated Halliburton would have been aware of the new style of architecture even before it came to the United States. He already had an incomparable site, and now he would erect a house as strange, compelling, and

*(Continued on page 2)*



*Construction crew as house nears completion*

## Halliburton House, continued from page 1

improbable as some of his oft-related adventures. The choice of architect was already half made, as he and Mooney had travelled with William Alexander Levy, a recent graduate of New York University, who was fully committed to the Modern Movement. Levy was eager to undertake the project and was willing to move to the West Coast to supervise its construction. The design that emerged was simplicity itself: A tall, austere volume of concrete and glass was perched at the very edge of a 300-foot cliff. It contained the spaces for living, dining, and entertaining, all related to huge glazed openings that framed the stunning views. Below the main volume and running along the edge of the escarpment was a wing with three bedrooms. Virtually every surface was to be of poured concrete or glass.

In stark contrast to the simplicity of the design was the complexity of the construction. The site was barely accessible and some of the equipment could not scale the extremely steep slopes. Massive quantities of cement and steel had to be brought up by hand, significantly slowing the work. It was also difficult to find laborers with the skills required to form and pour concrete walls, and Levy turned out to be a demanding architect, insisting that every element of the house meet his stringent specifications. All of this resulted in construction costs far higher than had originally been projected, which led in turn to conflicts between the architect and the owner.

### OCCUPANCY

The house was officially completed in 1937. Halliburton had ambivalent feelings about the place, in part because of the drain imposed on his finances but also because it represented his “domestication.” In any case, this was to be his home for less than two years, as he, Mooney, and their entire crew were lost at sea when sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco in March of 1939.

Halliburton’s parents put it up for auction in August of that year. It was a difficult time for real estate, and the house was no doubt too extreme for the taste of most people. It was not sold until 1941, when General Wallace and Zolite Scott acquired it. It remained occupied by members of the Scott family until Zolite’s death in 2004. It then passed to their daughter Zolita who left it empty and died in 2009. The house is presently on the market.

### HISTORIC IMPORTANCE



*Interior hallway of the bedroom wing*

The Scotts made very few changes and the house remains in a condition remarkably similar to that in which Halliburton left it — an almost perfectly preserved monument to the romantic ideals of its original owner. It is among the most important works of modern architecture in Orange County, and it is certainly the most important such work in Laguna Beach. This was no beach cottage; rather it was the prototype of the sort of house that would later come to dominate the city: simple, dramatic, organized around distant views, intended as a place both of retreat and of entertainment and pleasure. While the city has since grown all the way up to the top of the hill, the views from the

Halliburton House remain unobstructed and as dramatic as they were when it was built. And the place was built to endure, as perhaps few other houses in this town have ever been built.

SLCA is working on a historical report to document the significance of the Halliburton House with the goal of qualifying it for the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources. Some consulting work will be required and the SLCA would be pleased to accept offers of financial assistance. ☀



*Alex Degarmo, the 2010 recipient of the SLCA Scholarship, with board member/presenter, Barbara Bowie*

## Going to College with a Garden in Mind

By Tom Osborne

Annually the South Laguna Civic Association donates \$1,000 for scholarships to support Laguna Beach High School graduates. The student must live in South Laguna, have outstanding academic records, and write an essay describing their activities in civic, community and/or environmental affairs. Students are asked to explain how these activities have shaped their educational and career plans. Although the reviewing committee may divide the award among several recipients, this year a single applicant was chosen.

Alexandra Degarmo was awarded the 2010 SLCA Scholarship. SLCA Alternate Director Barbara Bowie presented the award to Ms. Degarmo at the Honors Convocation held in the school’s Artist Theater on June 11. In her scholarship application essay, Alex (her name of choice) wrote about her involvement with the South Laguna Community Garden. “As a direct result of my involvement in the garden, I learned about organic biodynamic principles, which are based on [growing] food in a completely organic system. I believe that we need to pay attention to the way our actions affect others and learn to create balance in the world....I plan to carry the message about balance and the environment to others outside of my immediate community.”

When I contacted her at Bucknell University where she now lives, majoring in accounting and playing on the school’s Division 1 soccer team, she stressed the garden where she had worked with her dad: “The garden helps the community come together in a very healthy way. It helps to make places that are run down into a beautiful sight. It is also a way for children to use their time other than watching



### SOUTH LAGUNA CIVIC ASSOCIATION DUES

- Individual \$15
- Family/Business \$25
- Supporting \$50
- Sponsor \$100
- Contribution for historical research \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Friend of the South Laguna Community Garden \$100

*Additional contributions are welcome!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The SLCA is a non-profit organization; however, your contributions are not tax deductible.

### SLCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill Rihn .....	President .....	415-1312
Greg O'Loughlin..	1st Vice Pres .....	499-2241
Mike Beanan .....	2nd Vice Pres .....	499-6367
Jim Joseph .....	Secretary .....	499-5974
Mary Ives .....	Treasurer .....	499-2857
Morrie Granger .....	Director .....	499-2746
Tom Osborne .....	Director .....	499-4809
Sharon Larimer .....	Director .....	499-1224
Lisa Marks .....	Director .....	499-1231
Mel Harwell .....	Director .....	499-0541
Barbara Bowie .....	Director .....	499-9452
Cindy Love .....	Alternate .....	499-9100
Richard Picheny .....	Alternate .....	499-0505
John Thomas .....	Alternate .....	499-5099
Jeanie Bernstein .....	Emerita .....	499-3190
Ann Christoph .....	Emerita .....	499-3574

TV or playing computer games. It helps the community grow as a whole and always has a positive effect on people. Whenever I went to work on the garden, everyone there was always so positive and happy, making our community positive and happy.”

Imagine sending off a daughter or son to a distant East Coast college. Then think of how that young person might recall her or his most recent experiences in their hometown. Those memories are lasting, and will always remind them of where home is and why. This year’s scholarship recipient received a gift that will linger in her mind long after her scholarship stipend has gone for books and other essentials. ☀



*The last billboard, removed by crane September 24, 2010. G. G. Force photo*

## The Demise of the Billboard

By Bill Rihn

Once upon a time, long before South Laguna became part of the City of Laguna Beach, an advertising company erected a billboard on Coast Highway, between 4th and 5th Avenues. Just before we were annexed (1986±), the owners of the property where the billboard stood agreed to remove it as a condition of approval for rebuilding their house. Yet, after annexation they refused to take it out. They sued the City of Laguna Beach after the City informed the advertising company that the billboard was not permitted under City ordinances or the Coastal Act. The City agreed to a settlement that allowed the billboard to remain for 15 years, until September 7, 2010. On the day of reckoning, the billboard was still standing. The City prepared to take legal action. In addition, local citizens informed the advertisers that the billboard was no longer legal and the advertisers took down their ads. Finally, the billboard company (CBS), and the property owner arranged to have the billboard removed on September 24, 2010.

This billboard was the only one remaining on the Coast Highway, State Route 1, between San Ysidro and Santa Barbara. Thus, its demise is of significance not only in South Laguna, but also to everyone in Southern California. Another long-sought goal of SLCA and local residents has finally been achieved. ☀

### CANDIDATES' FORUM

Let council candidates know about your concerns. Get your questions answered. This is your opportunity!

The South Laguna Civic Association, Top of the World Neighborhood Association and Temple Hills Community Association are sponsoring a Candidates' Forum:

**Laguna Beach City Council Chambers  
Wednesday, October 20th, 2010  
7:30-9:30 p.m.**

There are three council seats to be filled. Incumbents Kelly Boyd, Toni Iseman, and Elizabeth Pearson are running for re-election, and Emanuel Patrascu is the sole challenger.

Members of the audience will be invited to ask questions of the candidates from the podium on any subject. This is your opportunity to shape future councilmembers' goals for the next four years. See you there! ☀



## CANDIDATES' FORUM

Laguna Beach  
City Council Chambers  
Wed., October 20  
7:30-9:30 p.m.

## Garden Plants Seeds of Friendship

By Ann Christoph

We are beginning our second year of the South Laguna Community Garden, with a successful year behind us. As Bill Rihn says, we are growing friendships as well as plants. A group that could move a shed across town, weed and terrace a desolate, unsightly lot, install fencing, build 30 garden plots, and have plants growing in two and a half months, has developed a lot of working relationships and appreciation for each other.

We are enjoying our greens, particularly the arugula, squashes, and pumpkins, and finally we are hoping for some late tomatoes if we will just get a touch of heat.

In April, the City Council gave the Garden an Environmental Award. It feels good to hear the compliments from passers-by as we work in the garden, and it was very rewarding to know that our efforts have been appreciated citywide.

Now we will be deciding if we want to proceed with an expansion to the lower part of the lot. The Planning Commission has approved the plan, but the lot owner, Paul Tran, has put the property on the market. The garden committee is looking into all our options. If you are interested in having a plot and/or helping make the garden a permanent community asset, please call Bill Rihn (949-415-1312) or Ann Christoph (949-499-3574.) Also see information on our website at [www.southlaguna.org/garden](http://www.southlaguna.org/garden).



Bill Rihn, president of SLCA, receives environmental award from Mayor Elizabeth Pearson at the April 20 council meeting. Council members Verna Rollinger (left), Toni Iseman (center) and Kelly Boyd (right) look on. Representing the garden were, front row, left to right: Sean Chavarria, Charlotte Masarik, Darrylin Girvin, (then Pearson and Rihn); back row: Tom Joliet, Sally Coffey, Mike Beanan, Morrie Granger, Gayle Joliet, Sharon Larimer, and Barbara Granger. ☀

## MLPA Update

On October 20th, the California Fish and Game Commission will choose among nine options for the marine reserve in Laguna Beach. Options range from including the entirety of the Laguna coast, an option supported by the Laguna Beach City Council and SLCA, to very small areas within the City. According to Ray Hiemstra of Orange County Coastkeeper, an ocean advocacy group, the Commissioners may choose a single option or narrow the selection to a few. Mr. Hiemstra said it is critical for citizens to show support for the marine reserve at the October meeting in San Diego. For more information, please go to [www.LagunaBluebelt.org](http://www.LagunaBluebelt.org) or contact Michael Beanan at 499-6367. ☀