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Gold in Them Hills

The real radicals may well be the land developers, whose tendency is to tear everything down and start all over again.

— Richard Loez —

If you drive south on Highway 5 and take the Pershing Drive off-ramp down to 26th Street, you will wind up on a narrow road through green hills and cool groves of trees, past a park where you will see children of different races playing together. Beyond this park is a business district beset with Spanish graffiti and

and little California houses from the early part of the century. It is as if someone threw Mission Hills and Laguna Heights into a bag and shook it.

Right next to the Javaro corner market on 25th Street, a neon and stucco flashback to the Forties—except, WE ACCEPT FOOD STAMPS TOMATOES, is the Golden Hills Turf Supper Club.

Entering the Turf Club is like opening up one of those water-color sets at grade school: every primary color is there, and the possibilities are just beginning. At the bar and around the piano are adults of most races and ages. If you ask them what they think of Golden Hills, the most integrated area of San Diego, you may be inspired and frightened at the same time.

Writer Jane Stein will tell you that Golden Hills is the first place where she ever wanted to live permanently. "I grew up in housing developments and shopping centers. This is the first time since I was a child that I have a sense of community. This is the first time I can go to the grocery and someone knows who I am. They don't know my name yet, but they know the name of the person behind me. Probably someday they'll know my name. I overheard a butcher, which I never had before. He knows me and talks to me, which is much better than going into Safeway and pulling out a prepackaged pot roast."

There is no supermarket in Golden Hills, just corner markets. There used to be a Safeway, but a few years ago two black men held it up and shot the assistant manager. Now the Safeway building is a welfare office.



photograph by Jim Cole

"People grow with other on this street," Stein says. "It's almost European. When I'm walking up the wide, quiet streets I look in the windows of the old houses and see the people living there and wonder who came before them. I walk along the sidewalk and see the names of the contractors. The date says 1908, and I realize that the sidewalk isn't going to go anywhere."

Frieda, the landlady, who is much older than Jane Stein, takes a cab every night four and a half blocks to her apartment because she is scared of the young blacks who yell, "Look at the white bitch in the short skirt."

Jane Stein is thinking about buying a house in Golden Hills. Frieda is thinking about leaving a gun.

A white-haired Mexican at the end of the bar, who was beaten and robbed one night outside the Turf Club, now carries a golf club with him whenever he walks in Golden Hills.

If you ask the right people in Golden Hills, the new, young, liberal residents, like Jane Stein, they will tell you with warmth about the racial and economic mix, and how they came to Golden Hills because of it.

If you ask the do-gooders, the tender at the Turf Club, he will lean over two inches from your eyes and tell you, "Golden Hills has been going downhill for the 20 years I've worked here. To me, Chicanos is a many word. Nobody calls me that. They think it is a badge of value. It's a slap in the face. These people like a slap in the face. Oh, we treat 'em all the same, though. We ignore 'em. These whites who are moving in

now love the niggers; they've been rejected by their own race, so they come here to be accepted. Ma, I'm a money lover! Jew, because I want to be a Jew. I'm not no goddam Jew. Mexican, I know them for what they are. My mother was one. I'm one. But I want to work, so the hell with 'em."

It used to be just one hill, Golden Hills, a small area consisting of 25 lots, bounded by 24th Street on the east and the alley between B and C Streets on the north. Now it is known as Golden Hills. The City of San Diego Planning Department and the Registrar of Voters declared that Golden Hills is the area between Interstate 5 on the west, Commercial Street on the south, 26th Street on the east, and Rain Boulevard on the north.

In the late 1900s, the mansion of Golden Hills were set in the middle of large lots to take advantage of the long view of the city harbor, and ocean. Jeannette Brunson, in the San Diego Union writes, "The affluent, newly arrived from the East, copied the turreted and towered mansions of the Eastern seaboard, often topped with a 'widow's walk'."

Some from the South built houses of national proportion with columned verandas and doocovers. Others from the Midwest favored solid, no-nonsense construction of brick, complete with basements and attics."

The original promoters had several novel restrictions for the subdivision. All houses were on large lots and were built 40 feet from the street so that the view remained unobstructed. The sale of

intoxicating liquor was prohibited, and no barns were allowed. To compensate for the latter restriction, the promoters promised to build at a convenient distance, "a two-story, fireproof barn, large enough for the accommodation of all. This building will be constructed with due regard to ventilation and all other means necessary to make it a veritable Horse Palace."

Some time around 1915 and the arrival of the automobile, Golden Hills started to deteriorate. There were owner, fancier communities, soon to be called suburbs, spreading like ice plants along the coast. But for a quarter of a century, Golden Hills had been the most beautiful and the most improved area of San Diego.

The current revival has little to do with antiracism and much to do with racial and economic integration. Golden Hills has a population which is roughly 48 percent White, 20 percent Black and 27 percent Spanish.

Long before the freeway became the racial dividing line, Market Street separated Blacks and Whites. Today, northeast San Diego, west of Wabash to Crosby, is a silent ghetto with only an 11 percent white population. And to many of the Chicano and black families on that side of the freeway, Golden Hills is still viewed as at least slightly antiracist, the next step to Hillcrest or some other middle-class neighborhood.

Hill Recreation, Community Relations Officer for the San Diego

(continued on page 4)

Gold in Them Hills

(Continued from page 1)

Police Department, lived in Golden Hills for six years. He chose to live there, like many other recent residents, because of the racial mix.

"A lot of young people moved to Golden Hills from San Jose or some of the other white suburban areas," he says, "and have escaped their own racism or ghetto. Some were working in the Model Cities program. I met people from Point Loma and La Jolla who had lived in San Diego 16 years and had never met a Black or a Chicano."

Unemployment in Golden Hills is as high as 15 percent, compared with the general city rate of 11.5 percent and a staggering 35 percent in southeast San Diego. Nearly a third of all the families in Golden Hills earned less than \$3000 in 1974. And while property values and rent are rising, population is falling. The present population of 10,000 is below the 1960 level.

Nevertheless, the new residents find that there is a vital incentive to living in a neighborhood with all ages, races, and incomes. The proponents of this kind of radical change see it as a passing phase of radical change or they could be onto something important.

Ellen Lucero is known in the neighborhood as a Mexican-American artist. She is a Slovak. "People think I'm Mexican here and are prejudiced against me," she sighs. "I'm a hybrid, actually, with an ethnic look. I lived in Watts for a while and thought I was Greek. Then I lived in Tijuana for two years. I look Mexican and have a Mexican name, but the Mexican didn't like me, because they have a word for it—they thought I was trying to pass as a Mexican."

Until recently, Ellen Lucero even felt alienated in Golden Hills. "But something must be changing," she says. "The guy across the street had a word to me since I moved in in 1969. Then one day he talked to me. He asked me if I was an Indian." At that time she was considering moving again, but in the last year she noticed a real improvement. "People talk in sports. Maybe it has to do with the moon or humidity, or maybe it has to do with the Food Coop and the Planning Association, but people are talking. I didn't even know my neighborhood was called Golden Hills until somebody started putting out a newsletter."

Suddenly her neighborhood has the right balance of friendliness. "I don't like the theme where peo-



ple stand on the corner yelling and dogs are running back and forth. But I don't like Hillcrest where no one is even out—just the glaring sunlight. Here, everyone treats everyone the way they are. When the proper old lady from Canada comes out, you talk very proper to an not to offend her, but you talk different to the girl across the street from Venezuela who smokes dope. There's a guy across the street; name is Jim. We call him the 'Herald.' He gets out there every Saturday morning, washing his car, and he's the one who got up and down the street. He's the typical tax-paying citizen, but all he talks to us about is, 'How you get a job?'

"I lived in Imperial Beach before I came here. To me, it meant hard substances, flat, dirt, people who drink beer and tell dirty jokes about their husbands and wives. Here, I think of green stuff, roses, birds."

How's your sister's pancreas? Are you getting by? It's almost like Little Italy in New York. No, it's more like Little Italy in the moon. "The Herald" is kind. He cares."

When Ellen Lucero describes her growing feeling for Golden Hills, she begins to glow and her fingers fly around her head. "You can go down to the park," she says, "and find your ass. You can get lost in these canyons. Me and my son Ramie go down for walks in the canyons and we feel like we're lost in the mountains. We make hotbells and pick berries. Like in the zoo, we feel lost and far away. "I lived in Imperial Beach before I came here. To me, it meant hard substances, flat, dirt, people who drink beer and tell dirty jokes about their husbands and wives. Here, I think of green

who spends most mornings in the Golden Hills park, is impressed with the agencies. She feels no reservations about living near the Gay Center. "Oh my goodness, no, why should I care? As long as they don't tear down the old house, I don't care who does what."

In Golden Hills, the protesters are not alone. They are joined by the Chicano, the gays, the counterculture, the senior citizens, the leftist lawyers, the exoteric architects, the low-income and the high-motivated. To them, what has been called urban decay is the fermenting of something personal

and warm. In this situation the real radicals may well be the land developers, whose tendency is to tear everything down and start all over again.

Gary Rees, a new homeowner in Golden Hills, works as a paramedic at the Bepi Area Community Clinic. Before that, he was the director of the San Diego Gay Center in Golden Hills, and before that he was an officer in the Navy.

Rees, whose grandfather was a member of the Ku Klux Klan in Ohio, was fairly despondent to find a place where people would let him be. "I was worried about moving here. When I moved here, there were alternative agencies in the neighborhood, but none of them were directed toward gay."

When we started the Gay Center we decided to be completely open about what it was, and the neighbors liked us. Ultimately, though, they like us because we cleaned up the yard."

Rees believes that the sudden desire for stability among his counterculture friends is deep-rooted. "Most of the people I know have been in a situation where they've seen their neighbors killed outright," he explains. "When I was small, my family had a 16 acre farm in Ohio, which my father and mother bought the night they were married. In the winter there was nothing except farms and fields. People used to come to take calendar photos of the valley. The man who owned the farm next door sold it to an insurance firm. It's probably not so copacetic now. The hills have been moved. "I get blown away almost weekly by the conservative domesticity of my counterculture friends."

here. You don't see Che Guevara posters; you see new furniture. It's a schizophrenic trend.

"We're not interested in changing Golden Hills. We want to keep it as much like it is as long as we can."

With the assistance of then-Superior Jim Bates, the Greater Golden Hills Community Planning Association was formed in 1972.

Most participants want to discourage the massive leveling of the community and the breaking up of cultural ties.

The effort is not without opposition. A small developer, John Burton, believes, "A few architects and lawyers who already have their \$60,000 homes are getting together to deny me the right to make a profit. And they're keeping the poor people from selling their houses for a reasonable profit. Look, the low-income Blacks and Mexicans—all those people—they're going to leave anyway. Property taxes alone are going to force them out. So what's all this hand-wringing about losing them? The only thing that's going to be lost through re-zoning is their ability to sell their houses for a decent profit before they move out."

But according to Jim Bates, the Greater Golden Hills Planning Association, the area is 69% owner occupied, with a much higher rate of absentee landlords than the city average. Few of the homes are owned by white people.

Criminal lawyer Larry Brandt, a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Planning Association, insists that keeping the economic and racial mix intact is, well, almost as important as preserving the old homes and the residential nature of the area.

The Planning Association is working now to attract Black Greeks to rehabilitate low-income housing. Some development of low-income housing should be an important part of their activities. And growth, he says, will be allowed but will be restricted to certain parts of Golden Hills.

"Some of the developers feel we're being conspiratorial," Brandt said. "That every board meeting is open. We've tried everything from handbills to posters to attract people who don't share our general viewpoint. If someone out there doesn't agree with the way things are going, I hope he gets his ass to the meetings." Brandt believes a common ground will be reached. "We don't have to fight about everything. The property owners can still make money and we can still have our quality of life."

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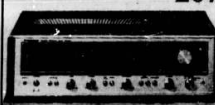
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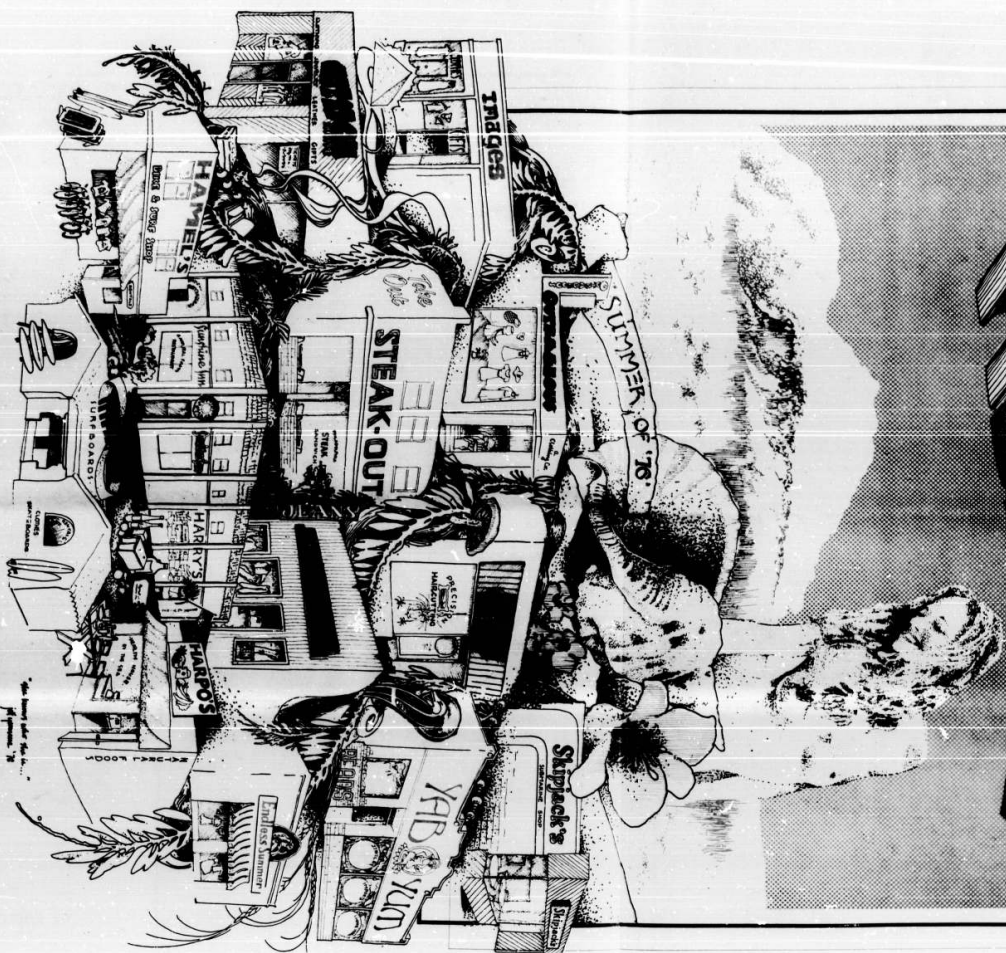
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th ludicrous and painful results.

Robert Burke and Ray Stenger

Directorial license in the matter of Shakespearean settings is the bubonic plague of the modern theatre.

did he have to turn the shepherds into clowns, and country fellows of Shakespeare's pastoral imagination into settlers, trappers, foresters, and Indian braves out of an old Ronald Reagan movie? Why did he have to—why should he want to—what could have inspired him to replace the word "courtier" by "fort," every time it appears— that the wicked brother of the banished Duke is now labeled "usurper of the Fort"? It is not that this silliness is positively obnoxious or that it interferes in any serious way with the general excellence of the production. At best it produces mere amusing comic business, as with Audrey

recent summers are so memorable he is content to do things in the old-fashioned way, to allow Shakespeare's instinct for appropriate setting to take precedence over his own, and to practice his directorial art unobtrusively, without gimmicks and without self-display. News about that in a subsequent review.

My friend and I elected to eat in the main dining room, and when we arrived at 6:30 p.m., the place was already jammed. To avoid a long wait, arrive early.

The people who wait on you as well as those dining seem pleased to be there, and the service is attentive and unobtrusive. The waiters and waitresses dress in a style generically Oriental, and while they

Prophet is the avocado-mango cheddar cheese. It costs \$2.65. It's served on beef herb buns, seems to be several inches. For those who wish to be nutritious, health food with the can of a child entering the ocean the first time, I suggest this as a sandwich. The new ones may be thrown by flounders by

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"Troilus and Cressida is one of the six Shakespearean plays I've never mounted. I've never even seen a production of it," Kellner said. "Just reading and/or researching the costume takes a long time."

and props Shakespeare described in his plays were typical of the era in which the play was actually set, or whether he was inadvertently making a reference to a more contemporary item used in his own day. For example, the battles described in *Troilus and Cressida* took place about 1100 B.C.

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xl is first-rate, with Carol Lees's careful and inventive songs successfully replacing the more familiar Renaissance melodies; it is too bad that most of them are sung by poor Tom DeMastris, whom some responsible quack of a singing teacher has convinced that one must vibrate in the voice by billful spasms of the diaphragm, with ludicrous and painful results.

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