

Forward-Thinking Fundraiser Draws On Historic Photos

By Amy Bentley-Smith

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Groups on the Peninsula are looking to the past to help the future of their beach community.

Tomorrow evening (Friday), the Alamitos Bay Beach Preservation Group and the Alamitos Bay Garden Club host a slideshow presentation of historic Peninsula and coastline photos to raise money to re-landscape Ocean Boulevard's medians. It is one of two fundraisers planned this weekend (Saturday is the Peninsula-wide yard sale) for the project.

"Lots of people are new to the Peninsula and Preston Smith is legendary for his slides," said Suzanne Poulsen, who is taking reservations. "We thought this would be a fun thing."

Preston Smith has been a Peninsula resident for more than 40 years. He began collecting photos of his neighborhood 25-plus years ago, when he was president of the ABBPG, the Peninsula's residents association.

"The original one was to get people to come to the meetings," Smith said of the slideshow that now includes a couple of photos from as far back as 1907 and 1910.

Involvement in the group was sparse and knowing how people liked to see old pictures of where they live, Smith said he put the word out that he wanted photos.

The idea worked: people came to the meeting, although Smith said he's not sure more people took an active role in the neighborhood as a result.

The slideshow has continued to bring people together through the years. Smith says it's like reruns of Disney classic movies: the slideshow seems to make an appearance every decade or so.

Median project coordinator Linda McCullough said she's excited about the slideshow presentation. Despite having lived on the Peninsula for 17 years, McCullough has not seen the show before. She thinks there are many others like her and that's one reason the slideshow was selected as a fundraiser for the median project.

"We've been trying to do things that are fun," McCullough said of the various fundraisers to raise the \$200,000 needed to complete the project. Those fundraisers have included a home tour of a newly built contemporary home and a Carnival Cruises cruise.

The fundraiser thermometer at the entrance to the Peninsula shows that \$163,000 has been donated so far. McCullough said that amount is enough to get started and even finish. The \$200,000 goal would make the project that much better.

“The closer to \$200,000, the more bells and whistles we can add,” McCullough said.

The hefty price-tag is due to a lot of unseen work that is required, such as upgrading the sprinkler system, refurbishing the soil and hiring a landscape architect. The plan the committee selected is very palm tree-oriented. One hundred small palms and other plants will fill the 65 median planters when complete.

“It’s a big community project,” McCullough said. “I doubt any other community has done anything like it.”

The slideshow with narration by Smith begins Friday with a mixer at 5:30 p.m. at the Alamos Bay Yacht Club, at the end of the Peninsula. The club has donated the space and will donate all no-host bar proceeds to the cause, McCullough said.

The show itself will begin at 6:30 p.m. People who remember the Peninsula “away back when” are encouraged to reminisce, Smith said.

Cost is a suggested donation of \$20. For reservations, call Suzanne Poulsen at 433-0710.