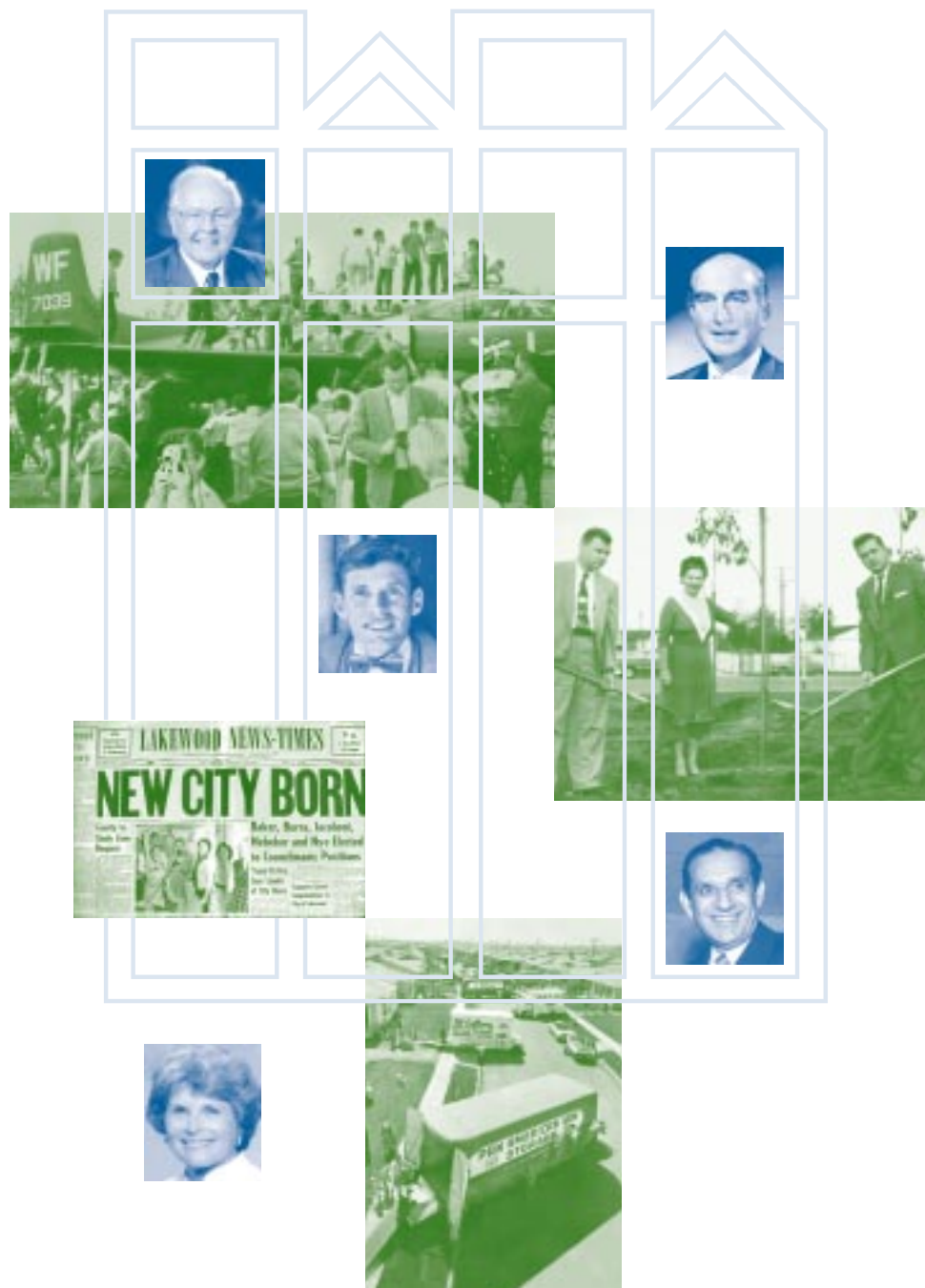


Pillars of Community was made possible by a grant from the S. Mark Taper Foundation in support of the observances of the 50th anniversary of Lakewood's incorporation in 2004.

Lakewood is proud to recognize the contribution of the Foundation, created by pioneering Lakewood developer S. Mark Taper.

Pillars of Community was designed by artist Cheri Gaulke. The pillars incorporate historic photographs from the collection of the City of Lakewood, as well as photographs that illustrate the people, traditions and values of Lakewood today.

LAKEWOOD'S PILLARS OF COMMUNITY



LAKEWOOD'S PILLARS OF COMMUNITY

Pillars of Community is an artwork commissioned in Lakewood's 50th anniversary year to commemorate and celebrate the history of Lakewood, the traditions and values of Lakewood residents, and the special men and women who have been named "Legends of Lakewood" for their contributions to the Lakewood community since its founding in 1954.

The founders of Lakewood in the 1950s had many hopes for the future. They held values that they passed to their sons and daughters. They created community traditions that you can join in today. These programs and community events demonstrate how neighbors in Lakewood still work together to build their community, just like the early residents of Lakewood did.



Most of Lakewood was built between 1950 and 1953.

Each eleven-foot pillar is topped by the representation of a house. Each pillar has historical photographs that help illustrate the theme of the pillar: the Founders, the Vision, and the Community.



Voters made Lakewood a city in 1954.

Each pillar has the names of those who are honored as well as some of the things that "Lakewood Legends" have done to build our community over the past 50 years. Some worked to make Lakewood a city in 1954. Others created the civic organizations that do so much to make life better in Lakewood today. The names of the "Legends of Lakewood" are displayed on colorful glass bricks set into the tall glass panels of each pillar. One panel is devoted to all of the men and women who fought for Lakewood's incorporation in 1954. We think of these people as our "greatest generation."

The pillars list the inductees in the Lakewood Civic Hall of Fame. The members of the Lakewood Civic Hall of Fame are true "Legends of Lakewood" - civic and community leaders who are Lakewood's builders, philanthropists, founders of community organizations, and generous volunteers.

The pillars also recognize Lakewood's partners in the creation of the Lakewood Plan for municipal service contracting. When Lakewood began, all its city services were provided by county departments under an innovative plan developed by John S. Todd, the city's first City Attorney. These Los Angeles County departments have given Lakewood an exceptional level of public services since the first days of the new community.

Pillars of Community honors the past, but the pillars also invite us to look to the future of Lakewood with the example of heroic and visionary men and women to guide us. As the new Lakewood legends are recognized for their years of service, their names will be added to the pillars in a continuing process of renewing the city's commitment to our history, traditions and values.

For young visitors

Young visitors might want to look first for the theme statement on each pillar, and then study the historic photographs.

The thematic statement on each pillar is in large letters, and the names of those who are honored for their contributions to Lakewood are on individual glass bricks.

You might also find it interesting to think about the names you would add to a list of Lakewood heroes.

- > **Would it be a member of your own family?**
- > **Do you see yourself as a “shining example” of someone who helps build the Lakewood community?**
- > **Would the list include your teacher, coach, or someone from your neighborhood?**
- > **What other traditions and values could be seen as a “pillar” supporting Lakewood?**
- > **If you designed your own personal Pillar of Community that honors the important people and organizations in your life, whose pictures and stories would you include?**



Lakewood Youth Sports began in 1957.



Families stood in long lines to buy a Lakewood home in the early 1950s.

Founders Pillar

We remembered the future.



Boyar, Taper, and Weingart.

Louis Boyar, S. Mark Taper, and Ben Weingart were the pioneering developers of Lakewood. Their Lakewood Park Corporation surmounted enormous technical difficulties to build more than 17,000 Lakewood homes in less than three years. They sold their houses to young families at a price they could afford.

Far more than just a housing tract, their “city of tomorrow” incorporated dozens of innovations and design features that are identified today as contributing to a superior quality of life. Lakewood today succeeds as a community of homes, parks, schools, places of worship, and retail centers because of the wise decisions of Weingart, Taper, and Boyar. At the heart of Lakewood, they placed the remarkable Lakewood Center, for many years the largest regional shopping center in California.

Each of the builders of Lakewood went on to remarkable careers after Lakewood, and each of them became noted philanthropists. In particular, the S. Mark Taper Foundation and the Weingart Foundation have been partners with the city in the construction of important public facilities, including the S. Mark Taper Foundation Vista Lodge at Monte Verde Park and the Weingart Senior Center.

City Attorney Emeritus John S. Todd was a young lawyer involved in civic matters even before Lakewood was built. In 1954, he developed an entirely new way for cities to govern themselves.

Todd conceived the idea that unincorporated communities didn't have to choose between annexation by a big city or building a civic infrastructure from scratch. Instead of having city employees provide all the functions of traditional local government, Todd believed that city councils could turn to the county to deliver municipal services through a system of contracts.



John S. Todd

Todd correctly reasoned that Lakewood residents were happy with county-provided services and continuing them by contract would save the new city the huge cost of hiring and managing new police, fire, road, and sanitation departments.

Lakewood was America's first "contract city" and Lakewood has become famous all over the world because of the plan Todd created. The contract plan for local government was soon copied in a wave of incorporation movements in Los Angeles County and then throughout the state. Today, the contracting plan that Todd created shapes the future of one-quarter of California cities and hundreds of cities in all parts of the nation and even in other countries.

Todd's contribution to local government innovation is often called the Lakewood Plan or "contract city" form of local government, and Lakewood City Attorney John S. Todd is honored as the "father of the Lakewood Plan."

Vision Pillar

Our best years are ahead of us.

Donald Rochlen brought neighbors together to fight for the incorporation of Lakewood. He shared with them his energy, enthusiasm, and skill in community organizing.

Rochlen had been hired initially by Ben Weingart to promote the new Lakewood Park development. When, in 1953, efforts were made to annex Lakewood neighborhoods into Long Beach, Rochlen joined with John S. Todd to organize community resistance.



Donald Rochlen

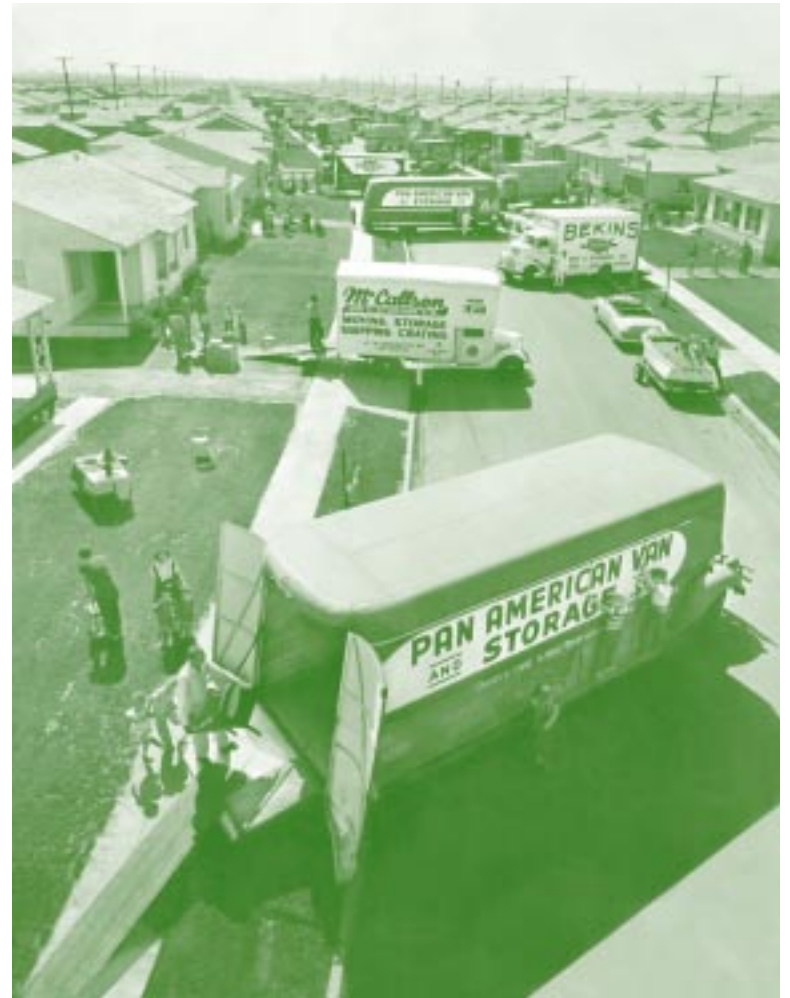
Rochlen helped Todd outmaneuver the piecemeal annexation of Lakewood using Todd's strategy of voter protests to prevent annexation elections from being held. Rochlen's energy and drive greatly impressed Todd. Rochlen then helped the eager volunteers of the incorporation movement in early 1954.

Rochlen also aided in the production of a film shown everywhere in Lakewood advocating incorporation.

Donald Rochlen is best remembered today for orchestrating the most famous photograph of early Lakewood. (right) As Rochlen remembered in 1999, "New homeowners were moving in at the rate of sixty families a day. So to symbolize that, we got sixty moving vans up and on the street and told the people just to come out and put out a few pieces of furniture on the lawn." Rochlen's photograph was printed in Life magazine and became an icon of suburban America.

The first members of the Lakewood City Council

- Gene Nebeker, Angelo Iacoboni, George Nye, Jr., William Burns, and Robert Baker - were among thousands of young war veterans who migrated to Los Angeles County and purchased homes in Lakewood. In 1945, they took John S. Todd's "contract plan" for city government and made the untested plan work.



Moving day in Lakewood in 1953

Baker, Burns, Iacoboni, Nebeker, and Nye were elected to the first Lakewood City Council on March 9, 1954, when residents voted by 7,524 to 4,868 (a margin of 3 to 2), to incorporate Lakewood. Already well known as president of the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce, the Exchange Club, and Sons of Italy, Iacoboni (then age 35) received more votes than any of the 38 other candidates. Iacoboni was followed in the tally by real estate broker Gene Nebeker (then age 32), newspaper reporter Burns (age 41), Nye who was a teacher (age 33), and engineer Bob Baker (age 31). When the city council met for the first time on April 16, they named Iacoboni to serve as Lakewood's first mayor.

The first city council meeting continued through the entire night into the morning hours of the next day as they read the code book of city ordinances, formally adopting each one.

"Let's give them this chance to govern themselves, and one of these days they'll be showing us a thing or two about government."

—Herbert C. Legg, Los Angeles County Supervisor
January 1954

Los Angeles County departments were Lakewood's partners in providing world-class municipal services through contracting in 1954. Today, they are still the city's principal service providers. Without the commitment of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Department, the County Fire Department, the County Department of Public Works, the Office of the County Counsel, the County of Los Angeles Public Library, and many other county divisions, the Lakewood Plan for cityhood in 1954 would never have succeeded.

At critical moments in the battle for incorporation, it was the leadership of these county agencies that gave Lakewood supporters the confidence that they would succeed when many observers had claimed it would be impossible. Help in circulating the petitions to hold an election to create the new city were circulated by off-duty fire fighters, for example.

In the years following Lakewood's incorporation, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff of Los Angeles County, and heads of other county departments expanded the reach of the "contract plan" to many newly incorporated communities and eventually to more than forty cities in Los Angeles County.

Contracting with the county brought the benefits of local self-government to communities that otherwise might have become an anonymous district within some big city's boundaries. It gave hope to new homeowners that their aspirations for themselves and their children might be realized. Later, non-profit agencies and private businesses became major providers of city services by contract.

Lakewood's "greatest generation" of founding families moved into new Lakewood homes in the early 1950s and found, even in the midst of their diversity, that they shared common hopes for the future of their sons and daughters. They built a thriving community based on those hopes and dreams in the early 1950s, resisted the lure of annexation by Long Beach in 1953, and put their faith in the members of the first Lakewood City Council in 1954. Through these difficult,

early years, they clung to values that still shape Lakewood: volunteerism, loyalty, good government, service to their community, respect for law, family recreation, concern for youth, and commitment to education.



Lakewood residents in 1955



Lakewood Sheriff's Station in 1959

Community Pillar

Times change. Values don't.

Dr. Walter Montano and Jess Solter were Lakewood Village neighbors and fellow Lakewood Lions Club members. One day in 1945, they shook hands over a backyard fence, pledging to begin a community program that would foster good relations between the United States and our Latin American neighbors.

Their inspiration began the oldest community event in Lakewood. Starting with a flag exchange program and expanding over the years to include a community festival and community events, Lakewood's spirit of pan-American friendship never wavered.

When three Lakewood parks were dedicated in 1957, they were named after Latin American heroes: Simon Bolivar, whose armies freed half of South America from Spanish rule; José San Martín, who liberated southern Peru and Chile; and José Del Valle, who wrote a declaration of independence for Central America.

Today, Montano and Solter's tradition of celebrating pan-Americanism continues. The annual event kicks off each May with the El Comienzo Luncheon, followed by the three-day Pan American Fiesta at Mayfair Park. The festivities include amusement rides; music and entertainment; and food, craft, community, and cultural booths.

Lakewood's annual Pan American Festival is the only celebration in the United States outside of Washington, DC honoring the people and cultures of Latin America.



Pan American Festival

Former Mayor Jacqueline Rynerson joined hundreds of young mothers and fathers in the battle to prevent annexation by Long Beach and secure the incorporation of Lakewood in 1954. With her husband, Bud, Rynerson walked petitions and helped organize dozens of pro-incorporation volunteers. When her efforts were successful, Rynerson went on to serve her community as a leader in the city's Recreation and Community Services Commission and the Lakewood Coordinating Council.



Jacqueline Rynerson

In 1978 Rynerson was elected to city council. She served three terms as mayor, retiring after twelve years as a city council member. During her years of dedicated service, Rynerson began the Lakewood Beautiful Home awards program which continues to honor pride in property upkeep with annual awards for Lakewood's best looking homes. Through her efforts, the volunteer-based Project Shepherd program was begun in 1973 to assist needy families. She also assisted in the development of the Weingart Senior Center, the expansion of River Park in East Lakewood, and the purchase of the adjacent Lakewood Equestrian Center. The park was named Rynerson Park in her honor in 1990.

In recent years, the values of Lakewood's "greatest generation" have taken root in programs such as Meals on Wheels, the Teens in Lakewood Care volunteer program, the Project Shepherd program aiding needy families, the Lakewood Beautiful Home Awards program, and Lakewood Neighborhood Watch and the other law enforcement volunteer activities sponsored by the city and the Lakewood Sheriff's Station.

Your name here

The last panel on The Community pillar is reserved for you, should you accept the challenge taken up by Lakewood residents in 1954 to build a community of hope and dignity for all its residents of every age and background.

This panel asks:

- > **What is your vision for Lakewood's future?**
- > **What would you make a permanent part of the city's traditions and values?**
- > **How can you make a difference to your neighborhood and community?**
- > **What will you add to the stories of Lakewood?**



Top: Patriot Day, park sports in the 1960s, Sky Knight helicopter patrol
Bottom: swim class, Lakewood Equestrian Center

The values that Lakewood's founding families established in 1954 still flourish in traditions that continue today – Lakewood Youth Sports, the Pan American Festival, Lakewood Volunteer Day, Lakewood Tot Lot parent cooperatives, Lakewood's many civic and service organizations, Lakewood's PTAs, and the city's religious congregations.



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