

In 1952-53, we were married and poor with one young daughter and one on the way. We lived in a very small place in Maywood, Calif. And drove 1941 Ford.

I was earning \$1.40 per hour and my wife was not working. I worked at Norris Thermador's Vernon plant.

Just for something to do and for entertainment on Sunday we would take "drives" in our 1941 Ford, that is if we had any gas money.

This one Sunday, as we were driving down Carson on our "ride," we saw a Sales Office. It was located on the property which now belongs to McDonald's Drive In and take out food restaurant.

Anyhow, just for fun, we stopped and entered the sales office. Before that we had walked through the "models" of houses that were being exhibited for sales. We particularly liked the "F" model as it had a window looking out over the back yard.

Surprisingly, the salesman greeted us warmly and asked us which model we had liked. We said we really liked the "F" model and he immediately asked us how much money we had on us. We had a check for \$15.00 from some insurance company and that was all we had that day. The salesman put a pin on the map where 4412 N. Stevely would be built and signed us up for this particular house. He told us we would have to come up with \$800.00 more before we would be able to move in. Since we had such a low income, we really couldn't scratch the \$800.00 together so my wife had to borrow some of the rest of the down payment from her mother. We drove out and watched our house being built and in May of 1953, bare bones poor, we moved into our new home. Unable to immediately turn on the electricity, we used candles and we hand carried into the house our few meager possessions in boxes. We have been here now 50 years as the original owner. We liked the way the city is run. The people at City Hall are friendly and helpful and we appreciate the lower crime rates. We notice that many of our neighbors have added many rooms to their homes instead of leaving Lakewood. Like many other Lakewood residents, we both have marked at one time for McDonnell Douglas Aircraft Co. now known as Boeing.

We raised seven children here and a couple of grandchildren.

Yours truly,  
Walter and Sheila Reece

## "Take Your Place in History" Essay

As a 39-year resident of Lakewood, I've had several "unforgettable" days as a private citizen, homeowner, journalist and public relations professional who earned part of my livelihood in this wonderful city.

Memorable experiences included seeing and photographing Robert Kennedy at the Lakewood Country Club, shortly before he was assassinated in Los Angeles; being honored for my work and nearly losing my arm in a chainsaw accident.

My biggest thrill came June 6, 1966 when I rode in the first Sky Knight helicopter, a Hughes 300 two-seater, on its inaugural day. I'd been photographing and interviewing Lakewood city and civic officials after their rides, then was surprised to be invited to climb aboard.

Shock number two came when I was strapped in, my door was closed and we took off. When the craft briefly lifted and veered off hard right, I felt like I was going to fall out. After recovering, I was treated to a brief but noisy ride over the civic center and west side of town.

I recognized how valuable helicopter patrols can be to law enforcement efforts. You can see the tops of buildings, their rooftop markings, which ones could be used for chopper landings if needed, recognize landmarks easily and identify roadways by the street configurations and patterns. Their super bright lights, onboard cameras and other special tools help Sky Knight pilots aid earthbound deputies ferret out criminals and control various incidents.

(The Sky Knight law enforcement program, first of its kind in the nation, was and still is operated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department at the Lakewood Sheriff's Station.)

The memorable occasion noted above came during my 1963-1968 stint as city editor of the Lakewood Enterprise, a twice-a-week community newspaper. I attended and wrote about hundreds of meetings, activities, events and stories of local and regional significance. Some were of state and national interest.

Lakewood City Council and Planning Commission meetings were covered as well as those held by the Lakewood Pan American Festival Association, Greater Lakewood Chamber of Commerce and Lakewood YMCA. But, I also worked closely with members of local civic, fraternal and service organizations and schools, including Betty Abrahamson, Joyce Gough, Joe Esquivel, Juanita Harlan, Wayne Piercy, Jackie Rynerson, Ted Schnee, Woody Smith, Larry Van Nostran, Paul Worthington and many other community notables.

I was honored to serve on the chamber and YMCA boards of directors during that time and chaired the chamber's Home Based Business Council in the 1990s.

Prized most among the numerous community citations <sup>received</sup> ~~accorded to me~~ were the Lakewood Jaycees' Distinguished Service Award as "Young Man of the Year in Lakewood" and the Pacific Coast Press Club's Arnold McCartney Memorial Award for the "newsman his peers felt contributed the most to exemplifying and furthering the profession of journalism."

Submitted by: Dick Roodzant

## ESSAY BY LOY W. SMITH

In 1948 my wife and I, along with our two-year old son, were living in Signal Hill. I was working in Long Beach. One day a preacher came in where I was working and invited me to come to a new church he was starting in the Lakewood area. He called it "The First Baptist Church of Lakewood."

It wasn't until 1950 when I saw an advertisement in the paper telling that new homes were going to be built in the bean fields east of Bellflower Boulevard, and that a new high school would also be built.

My wife and I came out to look at the model homes on Lakewood Boulevard north of Candlewood. In the process of looking, they also told us that the biggest shopping center in the world was going to be built just a few blocks to the south on Lakewood Boulevard.

We picked out a plan we liked from the models and they told us that construction on the homes in that area would begin in a few weeks. So we put \$150.00 deposit down on this blue headed pin on a map where our house would be. After construction was begun we would drive out from Signal Hill nearly every evening to look at "our house."

We had to park on Bellflower Boulevard and walk because the streets were not completed. In November of 1950 we were notified that our home was finished and we could move in. So on Thanksgiving Day in 1950 we moved into our new home. Our payments were \$43.50 a month for 30 years.

We moved in the same time that our neighbors moved in. It was so exciting, our first new home. But now came the work – putting in a lawn and shrubs and flowers and putting up a fence. We had salesmen coming by every evening selling back yard clothes lines (we bought one), incinerators and water softeners (we also bought one of these).

Over the next four or five years we had two more sons. We got involved in that church, "The First Baptist Church of Lakewood", the PTA, and a block group. Our sons went through the school system – MacArthur Elementary School, Bancroft Junior High, and Lakewood High School. When our sons were not in school they were at Del Valle Park playing sports.

Over the past fifty years, a lot has changed. The clothes line in the back yard is gone. The water softener has been replaced. We have added on to the house. Our mortgage has been paid off. The three boys have grown (one served in Viet Name in the Marines).

But a lot has remained the same. Our next door neighbors who moved in the same time we did still live there and we are still the best of friends. We travel together and know that when the one needs something, the other will be there for them.

We are still active in the First Baptist Church of Lakewood in Long Beach. We take our great-grandchildren to Del Valle Park to play. We still wave to the sheriffs when they drive by. We are still just as excited about Lakewood as we were the day we moved in.

Mr. & Mrs. Loy W. Smith

In 1952 we wanted to buy our first home. Long Beach was our choice but looked at a Lakewood house and decided to buy it as it was about ten thousand dollars. We did not like the house but did buy it and we now made it into a lovely home. We adopted two children, a boy and a girl. We raised them in the home we have lived in for fifty years. Lakewood is like a small town. Wherever we go we know someone from Lakewood. We have been happy here and Jack worked thirty five years in the city's maintenance department. We were block captains for many years. We have always been pleased with the parks sport programs. Our children spent many years playing different sports. The coaches were good and this was important to our family. We are long time members of Crossroads United Church of Christ. We have found many good things in Lakewood. It has been a long time and have seen many changes since I worked as a stock girl when May Co was built: Much empty land around then.

By Donna and Jack Spainhower

## How I came to be a Lakewood Pioneer

By Donald L. Versaw

To begin with, it was Amelda's fault we came to Lakewood to live. It wasn't that I didn't like the place. In the hot summer of 1950 it was hardly a town. I had never even heard of it. It was shooting up fast like Jack's bean stalk and in an unusual place: a bean field.

Amelda insisted we go and see the beautiful homes selling in Lakewood. "Where the hell is Lakewood?" I said, with as much negative inflection as a weary marine sergeant can express on Sunday. She showed me a full page newspaper ad displaying the models and all the hype about "Tomorrow's City Today". "Nothing down for veterans!" She said, adding emphatically, "You're a veteran. We could go there couldn't we? The tone of her voice told me she was serious. "It will be a nice drive", she said, adding that our two year old daughter Judy, "Just loves to ride in the car". My protestations were ignored. "OK", I said. "But just to look".

We got in our prized Studebaker and off we went on old highway 101. It's only about sixty miles from Oceanside to Lakewood. No Freeway but roadways too discouraging for joy riding.

Traffic where the models were was terrible. Cars zipping up and down the street, more snags than cheap nylons. It was an Oklahoma land rush. I was skeptical of the huge signs on the big oil derrick erected to mark the place, stating "No Down to Veterans". I didn't even want to tour the models. Amelda wanted to see them and Judy gave me little support for turning back and so that was it. We looked at the two bedrooms with den. They looked expensive, luxurious, and so new. They had kitchen ranges, refrigerators, garbage disposals, rubber tub washing machines and ironing boards that flopped out of the wall. Gleaming stainless steel and polished tile was everywhere, real hardwood floors and genuine lath and plaster, whatever that was. Three bed room models looked very nice too, all furnished with a life time accumulation of once read books and kick knacks. The most often question of salespeople was, "Does all this furniture and stuff come with the house?"

"Well, it's all very nice but we can't afford it," I told my darling wife. "Yes, we can!" she argued adding "We got to go somewhere and soon". She was right about that. I already had orders to Korea. Leaving her and baby wasn't what I wanted to do, but we'd decided I'd make a career of the marines. Buying a house with money I didn't have made little sense but seemed cheaper than paying rent. We still had to pay \$10 dollars though. It was my last buck until pay day but it was two against one, my wife and the salesman. I went back to Oceanside money poor but real estate rich.

When I went to Korea our new house was just a pile of boards and a bathtub on an empty lot. After returning to Lakewood I found Amelda had made our house into a beautiful home. Happily we lived in our "Holy Land" over fifty years. She's gone now. I'm still here among our memories.

DV03

10-18-03

Dear Ms. Stewart:

I have been a resident of the beautiful city of Lakewood since November of 1971. We Purchased our home in August of 1971, and we moved into a brand new home. We saw our home being built, this brought so much joy and happiness to our lives. We were able to pick out the decor and landscape. We were happy to find that we lived in an area near the best schools. It was freeway close and near the mall. At the time we move to Lakewood the mall was an open Air mall ,, but as time moved on it became a beautiful enclosed mall.

I have enjoyed working with Lakewood City staff members and the people in the Community. The staff is always helpful and is willing to help you whatever the need may be. The staff is always to instill in you the need to keep community not only beautiful, but to keep it As a city you can be proud to live in. In the spirit of pride I love to work on my landscape and Keep an updated look. I was delighted this year when my home was nominated for my Neighborhoods 2003 Home beautification contest.

I am satisfied being in Lakewood and very proud of the community. I am retired and plan to live the rest of my golden years in , "The city of tomorrow today," and forever.

Sincerely Florence Warren.

*Florence Warren*

## Fifty Years of Memories

BY Ronald J. White

I was 7 years old when our family moved to Lakewood in July of 1954. I think my parents paid about \$12,00 for our home. I remember riding my bike with some of my friends east on Del Amo until it ended at the riverbed. We would catch tadpoles, frogs and chase rabbits on our bikes. A few years later that riverbed became the 605 freeway.

Other childhood memories that come to mind are playing in vacant lots near our home. One of the lots became Lakewood High School and another became Del Valle Park. I'm not real sure, but I think I'm one of the kids playing on the plane in the jet plane photo taken at Del Valle Park. I played on that plane a lot until they raised it up off the ground.

Being a child raised in Lakewood during the 1950's was truly a Beaver Cleaver childhood experience. We were the original baby boomers and there was probably no less than 50 or 60 of us on each block. There were no gangs in those days, just kids being kids and having a lot of fun. Our safety was never a concern to our parents. Living on a street named Henrilee was especially exciting during the 60's and 70's. Every house on our block was decorated at Christmastime. We even had bus tours come down our street to see the lights.

I graduated from Lakewood High School in 1964. In 1975 we bought our home on Briercrest and raised our family in Lakewood. Our daughter graduated from Lakewood High in 1991 and our granddaughter is now in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade at Mc Carther Elementary School. That's the same school I went to 50 years ago when we moved to Lakewood in 1954.

In 1999 we buried my mom and dad. They lived in the same house on Henrilee street until their death. I suppose I'll live in my house on Briercrest until I die. As I write this essay, I'm having a multitude of memories flooding my mind about Lakewood. God willing, someday I'll write a book about them.



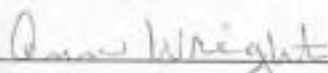
Having moved to Lakewood in 1960 from back East, I was totally impressed with all the many and varied services the City of Lakewood offered it's residents. Since my husband and I had young children, it was the parks and the activities available to them that completely boggled my mind, making me ever-proud to call Lakewood my home town.

My one daughter attended summer cake-decorating classes and to this day (she's 47) she stilldecorates beautiful cakes. Another daughter was part of a group who faithfully attended rehearsals at the park and at the end of summer, made a movie. And to this day (she's 38) she is active in her local theater, not only acting but has directed a number of plays.

But THE most special activity of all was riding on the Christmas sleigh and going through the neighborhoods singing Christmas carols. The "sleigh" was a flat-bed truck with benches to sit on and the sides were painted to look like a Christmas Sleigh. When opening day for making reservations arrived, I would be there early to assure a specific date and time for our Girl Scout troop. We would meet at Del Valle Park, and after caroling, volunteer moms would be waiting our return with hot chocolate and cookies.

The time period in which we enjoyed this wonderful Christmas tradition was around 1964 thru 1974.

Thank you, City of Lakewood!

  
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Ann Wright