

# All About Oakridge



The Oakridge Estate is a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument  
Former Residence of Barbara Stanwyck and  
Jack Oakie and Victoria Home Oakie

## Warm Wishes for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2023!

Friends of Oakridge was fortunate to resume historic tours, film screenings and events this past year. We wish to thank our loyal patrons for their generous support during the closure and re-opening of the Estate. As we eagerly await the City's proposed rehabilitation of the residence and grounds in the Spring, we ask that you please remember us in your year-end charitable giving so that we may secure the future of this unique, historic treasure. Donations may be made via our website: [www.theoakridgeestate.org](http://www.theoakridgeestate.org).

## Meet Miranda McCord Oakridge's New Facility Director



Friends of Oakridge would like to extend a warm welcome to Miranda McCord, who was recently assigned the position of Facility Director at the Oakridge Estate by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. We look forward to working with Miranda and can't wait to see what she has in store for both the house and the park. Of course we asked some questions!

### **What are the responsibilities of a Facility Director?**

The responsibilities of a director at their foundation are the same but can vary depending on the needs of their assigned facility or facilities. There are so many different things that a director oversees. They make sure the facility is following all policy and procedures. They are a supervisor to other full-time and part-time staff. Therefore, they need to make sure everyone is properly trained. They interact with city entities as well as outside groups and find ways to work together. They plan and coordinate special events, classes, permits and any other programming at the park. They also keep track of any funds coming into their facility. Being a director has a broad range of responsibilities, it would be hard to put everything into a short answer. Recreation and Parks holds a Directors Training that is two days long and covers various important topics for new and veteran directors alike.

### **What type of programming and events do you hope to bring to the Oakridge Estate?**

Oakridge is a special and historic residential site. Therefore, we hope to make it a special event facility and not an active recreation center or community center. This will all be determined in the future. Recreation and Parks or outside groups could permit the estate, but that is currently not being discussed.

### **Is there a timeline or schedule we can look forward to?**

Presently I do not have a timeline. We will wait on the Recreation Planning group before determining schedules.

### **What positions have you previously held within the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks?**

I came into the Department as a Recreation Coordinator. I worked at various Recreation Centers including Lemon Grove in Hollywood, Pan Pacific in the Fairfax District, Glassell Park and Ramon Garcia in Boyle Heights. Prior to that, in my college days, I worked for the City of Pasadena and the Pasadena Unified School District doing similar duties as a Recreation Assistant for the City of Los Angeles. I worked in after school clubs and with summer programming.

### **What hobbies or activities interest you away from work?**

I enjoy the outdoors. In the warmer months, I love swimming. I also like hikes that aren't too treacherous and getting to concerts when I can. I just saw Elton John at Dodger Stadium and what a fun and iconic experience!



The Oakies' 1961 DeVille (left) and 1951 Fleetwood (right) are seen in storage in 2008 while on loan to the Petersen Automotive Museum.

The Cadillacs are in original condition. Both photographs courtesy of the History Department, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

If you have visited Oakridge, you might ask, "Why not return the Cadillacs to their original home?" Although the residence features a three-car garage, the bays were never deep enough to allow the doors to securely close on the parked cars as seen in the photograph below.



For now, the vintage vehicles await their destiny under car covers and atop tire jacks. One surprise was to discover Jack's car keys in a blue velvet jewelry box in one of the glove compartments! Stay tuned for future

developments . . .

Photograph from *Jack Oakie's Oakridge* used with permission from the Jack Oakie and Victoria Horne Oakie Charitable Foundation

## Holidays, Horseracing and Hollywood



When most people think of Christmas Day, they envision religious celebrations, a visit from Santa, the exchange of gifts and a traditional feast with family and friends. Yet, such rituals were often an exception for many actors, producers and directors of Hollywood's Golden

Age. December 25th was opening day at Santa Anita Park racetrack and an appearance was a must. The races provided both a social and sporting outlet for the film community and studios encouraged their stars to spend a day at the track, especially when a new film was being released. Their presence at the venues commanded the attention of eager photographers, gossip columnists, and fans alike, generating massive amounts of free publicity for their power-hungry bosses. Moreover, many celebrities and movie moguls were Thoroughbred owners themselves -- among them Louis B. Mayer, Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire and Betty Grable, in addition to Barbara Stanwyck with partners Zeppo and Marion Marx.

An article appearing in the *Los Angeles Times* on November 28, 1937 reported that Marwyck Ranch took "stalls for six steeds" for the 4th Annual Christmas Stakes at Santa Anita. It was an impressive showing considering the operation had formally opened just a few months prior. Races had holiday themed names such as the \$5,000 Christmas Mile and the seven-furlong Holly Wreath Handicap. Barbara was under contract suspension from RKO Studios at the time and, according to biographer Victoria Wilson, commented, "I'm glad someone in the family is working" when one of her Thoroughbreds took first place in a race.

The 1937 Christmas Stakes drew an overflow crowd estimated at 50,000. \$789,159 was wagered on that single Depression era day. It must have been a spectacular sight. A *Los Angeles Times* article published the day of the event announced, "A brilliant midwinter flower display presenting a magic carpet of blooming colors is promised at Santa Anita. Over 1,000,000 plants, all hand-set, have been set out and 1,000 trees have been added to the permanent landscaping." Who wouldn't want to sit among the gold and yellow calendulas filling the infield on that warm, sunny afternoon and dismiss their dream of a White Christmas?

Additional information on Barbara Stanwyck and Marwyck Ranch is available in *A Life of Barbara Stanwyck Steel-True 1907-1940* by Victoria Wilson. The intertwined histories of the film and horseracing industries is explored in Alan Shuback's *Hollywood at the Races*.

with a community celebration at Oakridge Estate Park. The event, sponsored by Friends, Northridge West Neighborhood Council, Council District 12, and Volunteers Cleaning Communities, included the dedication of the Oakridge Estate Historic-Cultural marker on Devonshire Street, an ice cream social, live music, and family entertainment. Ken Bernstein, Principal City Planner and Manager of the Office of Historic Resources for the City of Los Angeles, spoke about the importance of preserving the Oakridge Estate for generations to come.



### **Volunteer Spotlight**

Friends of Oakridge is fortunate to have a group of dedicated volunteers who make our tours and events possible. This Newsletter, we are pleased to introduce Julie Arcelay.

#### **How did you first learn about the Oakridge Estate?**

I live a few lights over from the Oakridge Estate and have passed the house for years not thinking much of it, as you can barely see it from the street. It wasn't until 2015 or 2016 when I was working on the Pasadena Showcase House that something looked familiar. You see the house that was chosen for the event that year looked extremely close to Oakridge. Even more so, that year's Showcase home was originally designed by the famed architect Paul Williams. A possible Paul Williams home in Northridge? I had to learn more and, even more so, see it from the inside! Let's just say every time we passed Oakridge from then on, I would jokingly try to convince my husband to help me hop over the locked gate.

#### **What made you interested in volunteering and what do you enjoy the most?**

Since illegally climbing a fence was clearly out of the question, I decided to do some detective work via Google. I was pleased to quickly find the Friends of Oakridge website and even more delighted to see they offered tours. I signed up for the next tour and was beyond thrilled to learn more about the home. Not too long after the tour, I received a call from Friends and, before the lovely Candice and I finished our conversation, I was signed up to volunteer. The time and effort that everyone from Friends of Oakridge has put into telling and preserving the home's story and history made me want to help in any way I could. For those who are not from around the area, there is very little historic architecture in the San Fernando Valley. It's just about all gone.

#### **What were you most surprised to learn about the Oakridge Estate?**

Well, I knew we had several big-name Hollywood people that once had homes in the area but, as I mentioned, they had all been torn down and at the time you couldn't find much online in the way of articles or pictures. To my surprise, Friends of Oakridge had a wide collection of photos and articles displayed in the home. How amazing to learn more about who could have been my neighbors and, more importantly, to see the photos!

#### **What is your favorite room or place in the home?**

To be honest with you, Barbara's bedroom has to be my favorite. Being a woman in that era, with her unfortunate beginning of being orphaned at a very young age, I could imagine Barbara looking out her upstairs bedroom window over the property that she built. What a powerful woman, and I was walking where she would have walked many years ago!

#### **What is your favorite event?**

Due to coming along just before the pandemic, I would have to go with the virtual event featuring the Oakies' home movies as I'm new to Friends. To hear the stories and see the photos, you get a feeling of how much Jack and Victoria loved the home.

#### **What other activities are you interested in outside of Oakridge?**

First, would be creating quality time and memories with my family. Second, would be my passion for all things design. I have sat on multiple AIA (American Institute of Architecture), NKBA (National Kitchen & Bath Association) boards, and currently hold the President-Elect position for the ASID Los Angeles Chapter (American Society of Interior Design).



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