

Spring into spring gardening!

The Ubiquitous, Hardy Geranium

7:00 PM - Refreshments served

7:30 PM – Meeting

Vice President Trish Stewart called the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association (OTNA) meeting to order at 7:35 PM and thanked Peggy Basile for providing the treats. She noted that a number of free materials were available at the front table for attendees. These materials include “The Native Plant Garden at Madrona Marsh Nature Center,” lists of native vegetation and California native plant nurseries and resources, materials on the care of geraniums and the types of geraniums grown at **Grand View Geranium Gardens, Inc.** and Torrance Historical Society materials on the monthly Sunday walking tours of historic Old Torrance and special summer programs at the museum.

Business Meeting

VP Trish Stewart thanked the volunteers who distributed more than 1,000 flyers to publicize this meeting. Anyone else interested in volunteering to deliver OTNA flyers may let her know by e-mail at [Dbhumpback-37@yahoo .com](mailto:Dbhumpback-37@yahoo.com) or by telephone at (310) 320-1241.

Treasurer Mike Peterson gave the Treasurer's Report. OTNA started the year with \$490 in the bank. Income includes dues and miscellaneous donations and expenses to date total \$599. That leaves OTNA with a current net balance of \$841 in the bank. He stated that we were doing well with sponsorships, including sponsorship of tonight's meeting by Frank Scotto. When members receive mailings from OTNA, the date on the mailing label is one way to tell whether your dues are up-to-date. Mike has

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a list of membership names along with expiration dates for viewing after the meeting.

OTNA now has a **new website** designed and maintained by Mike Peterson of **PrimeZone Media Network**. Our Web address is oldtorranceneighbors.org. Meeting minutes are available on the website.

Trish reminded members of the upcoming Armed Forces Day Parade on Saturday, May 21, which has been running for 46 years. Torrance is one of only six cities that holds such an event. The Coast Guard band will be playing at the Armstrong Theatre on Friday, May 20. There is no charge, but tickets must be picked up in advance at the box office. Tickets still are available for the Friday 2:00 p.m. performance if you are home or can take the day off.

OTNA is staying on top of the Nativity Church Triangle Park issue. According to Nativity facility manager Rob Hardin, the church has made no forward progress on its plan to build a parking lot.

The Switzer Woman of the Year award will go to four honorees in 2005, including our own member, Janet Payne.

Janet Payne announced that the Torrance Historical Society was sponsoring three summer evening programs from 6~9 p.m. on Thursdays which will be free of charge to the community. On June 16 "Western Movie" Night honors the Weston Ranch. On July 14, in a joint celebration with OTNA (replacing the traditional OTNA picnic), they'll hold the "All America City" Night to honor Torrance's receiving the All America City award in 1957 with a 50s-style street dance complete with contests and classic cars. August 18 is "Honor Our Heroes" Night to tie a yellow ribbon around the museum lawn trees to honor Torrance heroes Ted Tanouye, Louis Zamperini and your own favorite local heroes. It comes complete with USO-style entertainment and a "Best Decorated Non-Motorized Vehicle" contest. Janet

suggested that it was a way to trick folks into having fun while learning about history.

Introduction of Meeting Sponsor

Trish introduced Torrance city councilman and mayoral candidate **Frank Scotto** of **Frank Scotto Towing**, as this month's sponsor of the OTNA mailing expenses. As chair of the Armed Forces Day Parade, Frank encouraged everyone to attend the free Coast Guard band concerts, noting that there was a misprint in the newspaper and that there was no Saturday concert.

Frank indicated that he started in business with a Chevron gas station in 1974 and now owns a number of auto towing companies in the South Bay, one of which is Mighty Transport Inc. They currently own 50 tow trucks and operate a freeway service patrol that provides free towing weekdays between 6:00~10:00 a.m. and 3:00~6:00 p.m. They have 110 employees and buy a new tow truck every month on a replacement schedule of every four years. To date, they've trained over 3,000 tow truck drivers. He said, "We meet (clients) by accident, and every person we meet is unhappy." They take 8,000 calls per month. On a busy day, that is 400~500 calls; a slow day sees only 200 calls. They provide 24-hour coverage. With the Town Western Towing Equipment company, he now builds and sells tow trucks to other companies.

Scotto confirmed that his offices were located right across the street from Lowe's. He invited interested neighbors to take a tour of the facilities, which are on the leading edge of towing technology. He said that the business is still about serving people and that his was the largest towing company in California. He said that there are no age restrictions for tow truck drivers, but indicated that it's a tough job. Only three women (all over the age of 30) have been hired to do the work in 30 years because "Southern California is not as safe as it used to be."

When asked if the towing company could refuse to take calls, Frank responded, "We don't." (He went on to state that because he's a city councilman, he doesn't do towing for the city of Torrance.)

Scotto described some unusual predicaments that he's encountered over the years, including the time he was given ten minutes to clear away 150 cars from a pier before a tidal wave was due and when he was asked to bring a car back from Pittsburgh within a couple of days (both successful.) He indicated that their goal was to leave the customer completely satisfied. If not satisfied, customers should call them the next day to tell them the problem. "We'd like to hear from you, either way."

In response to other questions, Frank said his freeway service changes tires for free, and provides two gallons of gas at no charge to the customer. Towing for trailers and heavy-duty trucks are contracted out to other vendors.

Trish then introduced guest speaker Henry Andrade of Grandview Geranium Gardens, Inc., one of the largest geranium suppliers (over 500 varieties) on the West Coast.

Guest Speaker: Henry Andrade, Grand View Geranium Gardens, Inc.

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Henry Andrade indicated that his father started the (wholesale) business in 1953. It now employs 60 people on a 48-acre rented site on a corner of the California State University Dominguez Hills campus. Their original 150-acre site just off Carson Avenue was lost to development. Henry said that he learned two things from his father, who called the nursery "our ranch": 1.) Why pick up a half penny when 9~12 cents are all around you; and 2.) Why not gamble? When you own a business, you gamble every day.

Henry then began a slideshow presentation on the Grand View Gardens operations. They employ a wind driven propeller to blow away air pollution (from fertilizer mounds.) They have 247 greenhouses and acres of outdoor nursery stock. Southern California has the same coastal breezes as in Africa.

Employees take cuttings from ivy geraniums in order to make more plants. It takes six months for a plant to become a "mother" which will last three to four years. Zonal varieties are knocked down every year. Mother stock comprises 15 acres at present. In addition to the leased CSUDH property, Grand View has a ten-acre property in Fallbrook as a fallback.

Staff sticks retipped geranium cuttings in sterilized sand to keep them disease free. Grand View does about five million cuttings per year. A three-inch cutting is rooted about one inch deep in the sand. New cuts are on the diagonal. Cuttings can be made from mother plants about every three to four weeks; don't butcher them.

Grand View Gardens specializes in geraniums because Henry's father believed if you specialize in something, you can make a go of your business.

Grand View mixes its own soil, which is too expensive a mix to duplicate or market.

This woman is potting a Martha Washington geranium, which needs a cold snap to bring it to full bloom. We use women for potting because they are faster than men.

Geraniums like a wet/dry watering cycle. They don't like wet feet. Use a pencil test. Stick a pencil a couple of inches into the soil and if the soil clings to the pencil, don't water.

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Grand View planted 65,000 Martha Washingtons in three-gallon pots this spring.

The rains last spring almost killed Grand View. They had to dig trenches to divert their mud runoff from the storm drains.

Among number one crops are four-inch pots and hanging baskets. Anything above the ten-inch size is considered a novelty. Ivy geraniums are the droopy variety used in hanging baskets.

Geraniums do not flower in the shade. Among the new geranium colors is Deep Chocolate and Black Magic, just out this year. We get new varieties of geraniums through pollination.

GV uses shade cloth to keep the plume moth, that hatches the budworm, off the geraniums. If budworm infests the plants, spray Malathion. After three weeks, if budworm remains, you must spray every week to break the cycle. Orthane is pretty powerful, so they recommend Malathion instead.

Time for repotting depends upon how heavy the geranium is watered. Soil does spoil and loses nutrients.

There is a lifespan for plants. They die, too. A rough estimate is a three-year life expectancy. Anything below 32 degrees Fahrenheit will kill them.

Geraniums are hardy and can be trimmed into hedges. They can be propagated in water.

Any pests in the pot are bad for plants. Don't buy them if they're infested. Moreover, if a plant ever develops Rust, get rid of it. Pull it out by its roots and throw it in the garbage.

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The difference between zonal and ivy geraniums is that zonal has a fuzzy leaf and ivy's leaf is waxy. The Martha Washington has ridges. Zonal and ivy geraniums in the South Bay bloom all year round.

Henry concluded his presentation with examples of scented, zonal and ivy geraniums, which he presented as gifts from Grand View Gardens to neighbors in attendance. He offered to conduct a tour of his nursery to members of OTNA who called him at (310) 217-0490, asking merely that neighbors remind him that they were calling as a result of his presentation at OTNA.

OTNA VP Trish Stewart presented a thank you gift to Henry Andrade for being a guest speaker. Henry then drew the winning name for the gardening door prize, which was OTNA Secretary Liz Fobes. (She did not decline.)

Vice President Stewart adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Fobes, Secretary

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