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To: walexander@ocregister.com

Subject: JOHN HALL COL #1554

### **HALL AROUND TOWN #1554 FOR THURSDAY MARCH 16, 2006**

"I'm so excited about the accomplishments of our club and the grants we received recently, I wanted to share it with you," said Launa Gould, and, as a matter of fact, that's putting it mildly as well as too modestly. Launa is president of the San Clemente Garden Club, which has been on a record run lately of contributing a ton to the community, not to mention making the most of that ever-loving old wishful promise that "Life Can Be Beautiful."

If you happened to be in or around the Pier Bowl this week on Tuesday, you might have noticed a lot more action than usual going on in Park Semper Fi as the Garden Clubbers started their latest project in taking over the planting around the Marine Monument--inspired by a \$2,000 grant from the Principal Financial Group to do a first class job of it. And don't they always? No Marine flag yet to fly next to the Stars and Stripes, but the gardens now being created are sure to help make both the statue and park more special than ever.

That's just one more bouquet for San Clemente courtesy of the Garden Club. If you have also driven past Casa Romantica lately, you may have additionally noticed that the Casa's front gardens on the right side of the entrance and parking lot are finally actually beginning to look like gardens. The weed patch left by the original million dollar landscaper from Santa Barbara has been manicured and transformed into something much more presentable since the unpaid local volunteer "San Clemente landscape artists" took over monthly care of the gardens--no doubt the way it all should have been supervised in the first place.

For four years the official name of the place--Casa Romantica Cultural Center & Gardens--has been a myth. Now, at last, we can add "& Gardens" without feeling like a liar. On Earth Day April 22, the Garden Club will also have a party at the Casa to celebrate the start of the planting in the raised beds around the parking lot palm trees.

No wonder Launa is so excited. Casa Romantica and the Marine Monument are only two of seven monthly civic projects supervised by the club, which also takes care of the City Hall rose garden, Library memorial garden and Pier garden along with similar related programs at the Rio Adult Day Care Center and the Boys & Girls Club. To say the least, all of San Clemente should be excited.

And with the vernal equinox set to glide in between the winter solstice and summer solstice next week to officially mark the moment Spring has definitely sprung about Monday midnight separating March 20 and March 21, the San Clemente Garden Club is just warming up--hopefully including all of us.

No room in this flowery symphony for any further cold snaps or anyone swimming or surfing in the 53-degree ice cube ocean. It has obviously been some other kind of San Clemente lately. Whatever, we still believe in Ferdinand and stopping to sniff the flowers.

Lucky us, to be sure in any kind of weather. Also on the immediate horizon, not only a change in the weather but a change in tradition. After 52 years of staging an annual Standard Flower Show, the SCGC gardeners, as they say, are "tilling new soil and planning a new spectacular one day event"--their first-ever "Community GardenFest" April 8 at the Community Center. Free admission, it will run from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., and will include presentations and demonstrations given by Sherman Gardens, Certified Nurseryman and other expert speakers with the highest credentials.

Subjects will cover everything from how to create colorful hanging baskets to what kind of fruit trees can flourish in San Clemente. There will be kids activities for all age groups and Girl Scouts merit badge workshops.

The San Clemente Art Association will co-host the GardenFest with its top plein air artists also to paint up a storm during the day and put together still another special show to match what the SCAA just did with its Caspers Park competition featuring all the hawks, windmills and rugged landscapes from our friendly nearby neighborhood wilderness area. The San Clemente Art Supply Center will provide the paint, brushes and canvas for a kids plein air workshop.

There will also be a plant sale, a garden flea market and contests. In a word, no leaf left unturned. Need more info? Call the SCGC's Homer Wishek at 498-2335.

On top of the GardenFest, the club's final piece of icing on the Spring cake (for the moment) will be "Garden Tour 2006" on Saturday June 3 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., spotlighting six of San Clemente's most outstanding coastal gardens. Mary Mohr, one of the most decorated champs with an impressive number of blue ribbons from past Flower Shows, is in charge of the tour. This one has a price although modest enough at just \$20. Mail her the check at 405 Avenida Ortega, SC 9272, and you will get your tickets and a map in the return mail. Mary can also be reached at 498-2818 for more tips, including the information that unfortunately, there will be no wheelchair access and the gardens aren't suitable for small children, the tour will take place rain or shine with no refunds, and prepaid box lunches by Angels Touch Catering will be available at \$10 extra.

Proceeds from every Garden Club event go to the SCGC scholarship fund and to community horticulture program is such as the sacred seven already mentioned.

All in all, our congratulations to President Gould as well as Mary Mohr and Homer Wishek, in particular, and the entire SCGC for contributing so much to the community and for making sure we're headed for the most colorful Spring in the 81-year history of our ever-exploding mega-village.

Meanwhile, oh yes, welcome at last to the Casa Romantica Cultural Center & GARDENS. Thanks again, Launa.