

We Honor Our Veterans by Honoring the Deed to their National Home

Editor's note: The following letter was received in response to the November Brentwood feature article, "Home of the Brave: Veterans Park Finally Gets the Green Light."



Thank you for your "Home of the Brave" interview. Unfortunately, some of the responses by Sue Young, Executive Director of Veterans Park Conservancy (VPC) and Jim Folsom, Director of the Huntington Botanical Gardens regarding their proposed park at the Los Angeles National Veterans Home were disingenuous and contemptuous.

In 1888, landowners Arcadia Bandini Stearns de Baker and Senator John Percival Jones unselfishly bequeathed and faithfully entrusted nearly 800 acres to the United States Government to permanently maintain a National Home for the exclusive benefit of America's Military Veterans. And for nearly a century, every generation loyally enforced and honorably upheld the guiding principles and patriotic spirit of the Deed until recent years, when business and special interest "land grabbing" became an assumed entitlement at the expense of our Veterans.

A Modern-Day Trojan Horse

VPC's proposed "veterans park" is sheer deception as their Web site specifically declares that the 16-acre parcel will be for the "creation of the first new community park to be built in West Los Angeles in over 50 years." It further states: "What we have in mind is a

scaled-down version of a grand community park in the tradition of New York's Central Park. Most importantly, it will attract all segments of our West Los Angeles community: Veterans and civilians, children and adults, featuring numerous activities for everyone."

Make no mistake; VPC's so-called "shrine in honor of our veterans"

is nothing more than a modern-day Trojan Horse designed to subvert the Deed so they can invade, conquer and build a massive public park on the Veterans' sacred land. VPC confirms their plans for an all-encompassing community park by declaring that the 16-acre parcel will "Demonstrate the positive community impact of reclamation of open space for public use, setting a precedent for discussion about the remaining federal property."

In an attempt to deflect the truth about their Trojan Horse scheme, Ms. Young portrays VPC as a hero riding on the proverbial white horse to save Veterans' property from commercial development: "We wanted to make certain that the property could not

be sold to the highest bidder." What she conveniently fails to mention is that in the process of "getting approvals at the highest levels" of government, VPC orchestrated a brazen behind-the-scenes, no-bid, rent-free agreement for a public community park, all under the guise of "honoring our veterans."

History Repeating Itself

VPC's recent back room wheeling and dealing in Washington, D.C., represents the greatest land heist since the Indians were given \$24 worth of beads and trinkets for Manhattan. At least they were given "something" for their land. To the contrary, the expropriation of this hallowed land was acquired "rent free" at the painful expense of America's Military Veterans who will receive absolutely nothing except an onrush of public invasion onto their

once exclusive and quiet haven for rest and rehabilitation.

The 16-acre parcel is arguably the most valuable on the West coast

and is estimated to be worth more than a quarter-billion dollars, yet not one penny goes to the Veterans. Ironically, not since Benedict Arnold tried to surrender West Point to the British has there been such a selfish act for similar hallowed grounds. Tragically, this land has been finagled from the very men and women who have bravely defended America's freedom and democracy, and particularly deprives those who are disabled and need privacy and quietude during their convalescence.

Veterans will never forget VPC's degrading slur against the time-honored "Duty, Honor, Country" creed of West Point and the watchword for all who serve in the military when they irrever-

ently engraved "Beauty, Honor, Country" in stone at the National Home.

Veterans also remember VPC's inability to finance their "majestic wrought iron fence" to beautify the entryway into Brentwood and subsequently hoodwinked the VA into donating \$1 million of Veteran's seriously needed healthcare money in order to complete their pretentious project.

"Such People"

In your interview, Brentwood News asks: "What do you think of the veterans who claim this is just a big 'land grab.?' Mr. Folsom responded: "What such people are saying is that our veterans don't deserve a kinder, gentler environment for healing." What a slanderous remark against Veterans who responsibly disagree with this gratuitous public park. No, Mr. Folsom, it is you and your VPC cohorts who think Veterans are undeserving by shamelessly trying to turn this century-old Veterans' Home of historic serenity and reverence into a clamorous and raucous public community park.

Equally disturbing is his discriminatory reference to Veterans who morally oppose this land grab as "such people," which underscores the condescending and pompous attitude that VPC displays whenever the Veterans-at-large disagree with their self-serving mission to beautify and serve Brentwood's "wants" at the expense of our fellow Veterans' "needs."

Enforce the Deed

There's absolutely nothing in the Deed of 1888 that allows anyone to designate any land for a public park, open space, commercial use, or any other purpose whatsoever, other than for the direct benefit of America's Military Veterans. It's time to stop the manipulative and opportunistic land grabbing at the National Veterans Home and to start enforcing the Deed. That's the only way to truly honor our Veterans.

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