

ENCINO SUN

PIERCELY LOCAL

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JULY 8-14, 2006



SUNDIAL
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

COMMUNITY

2006 Pet Orphans Dog Jog or Walk

Ralph's presents the Pet Orphans of Southern California event, featuring food, vendors, entertainment and adoptable dogs. Saturday, July 8 at Woodley Park in Encino. www.petorphans.org

"Friends" Speaker Series at the Encino-Tarzana Library
Tony Klenitz, author of "The Year I Ate My Yard," offers practical and humorous advice on creating a vegetarian lifestyle. July 12, 6:30pm. 18231 Ventura Blvd. in Tarzana. (818) 343-1983

Encino Community Center Events

Summer day camp, through Sept. 1: Drama camps, senior clubs and activities. July 18: Islands restaurant fundraiser. Pick up a flier and donate 15% of your check to the Center. Islands, 15927 Ventura Blvd. July 20: Internet workshop. Learn how to protect yourself and your children from online predators. 6:30pm. Free. ECC, 4935 Balboa Blvd. (818) 995-1690

Stage-Two Jet Hearing at Van Nuys Airport

Public input is encouraged at a meeting of the Board of Airport Commissioners, where officials will discuss phasing out noisy stage-two jets. Mon. July 17, 1:30pm. Airport Airtel Hotel, 7277 Valjean St. (at Sherman Way) east of Van Nuys Airport

Encino Neighborhood Council

Meets the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Encino Community Center, 7pm. No meeting July. 4935 Balboa Blvd. (818) 255-1040. www.encinocouncil.org

Homeowners of Encino

Meets annually, or on an as-needed basis. Contact President Gerald Silver at gsilver4@earthlink.net

Encino Property Owners Association

Public meetings twice yearly. (818) 981-0474

Concerts in the Park at Warner Center

Free concerts every Sunday at the Lou Bredlow Pavilion, Warner Center Park in Woodland Hills. Through Labor Day weekend. July 9: Preservation Hall Jazz Band, a spirited tribute to the New Orleans sound. July 16: Gary Puckett and the Union Gap plays favorites from the 60's. 6-8pm. 5800 Topanga Canyon Blvd. (818) 704-1358

Encino Chamber of Commerce Events

Business and Professional Lunch, featuring Fire Chief William R. Bamattre as speaker. July 18, 11:45am-1:15pm. Encino Glen Restaurant, 16821 Burbank Blvd., at the Encino Golf Course. \$19.50 members with reservations by July 16, \$25 non-members by July 12. (818) 789-4711. www.encinochamber.org

Sherman Oaks Galleria's Live Summer Entertainment

Cool jazz, Latin fusion and rock n' roll bands provide free outdoor ambiance at the Galleria on summer weekends. Through Sept. 2, Fri-Sat nights. 7-10 pm. July 8: Morris Wade & Soundtrack. 15301 Ventura Blvd. (818) 382-4100. www.shermanoaksgalleria.com/live

Citrus Label Society Meeting in Sherman Oaks

A chance to meet others who collect and admire citrus crate labels and art, and show off personal collections. Sat. July 15, 10am-1pm at the Sunkist building, 14130 Riverside Dr. (909) 981-5171. www.citruslabel-society.com

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Tapia Brothers farmstand is Valley's last frontier

Brothers Tom and Felix honor three-generation tradition

BY LYNN MILLS

You just can't seem to get a decent tomato at the supermarket anymore. And who has time (or space) to grow a vegetable garden?

Many of the farms and orchards that once characterized the San Fernando Valley have fallen victim to progress over the past six decades.

Yet, the Tapia brothers have remained firmly planted. As owners of the last produce farm left in Encino, brothers Tom and Felix Tapia have become the Valley's personal gardeners.

Located on Hayvenhurst between the 101 Freeway and Burbank Boulevard, Tapia Brothers is surrounded by million dollar homes to the south and golf courses to the north. And the farm is still thriving despite two major supermarkets located just three blocks away.

Housewives with kids, commuters in suits on their way home from work and nostalgic retirees still shop at the Tapia's farmstand for fresh produce – sometimes with groceries from the supermarket stashed away in their trunks.

Customers delight in their field-ripened strawberries and tomatoes. Corn

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Tom Tapia.

Cal-Trans proposes new options for I-405/US-101 interchange

BY ANA KACZMAREK

Aiming to alleviate traffic congestion, Cal-Trans is discussing four possible modifications to the I-405/US-101 interchange. Several proposed alternatives have drawn criticism from environmentalists and homeowners whom the plans would affect.

Cal-Trans officials presented preliminary plans to community members at a scoping meeting last month, aiming to evaluate stakeholder concerns and potentially significant environmental effects.

Targeting the interchange between the Southbound 405 and the 101 North and South, four alternative proposals were discussed to ease traffic congestion, increase safety and augment flow. Each of the four would call for a new,

two lane connector from the 405-S to the 101-N that would empty out before the Haskell off-ramp.

The entire project has an approximate timeframe of six to eight years, including scoping, design and construction.

Project Manager Ed Andraos touched on financing, saying, "This is one of the bigger projects that we have in this district and we only were able to fund up to the phase that we're in right now. We don't have enough funds to cover the design or construction yet." He stressed that the four alternatives were rough drafts, fully open to changes or complete rejection.

The first alternative would remove the current 405S connector to the 101 and replace it with two longer, two-lane connectors. The Burbank Boulevard

on-ramp to the 405S would be further extended, but it would provide no access to the 101 North or South. "It is anticipated that adjacent city streets will see increased congestion as motorists find new ways to access US-101," a Cal-Trans fact sheet stated.

Despite opposing any increase in traffic through residential neighborhoods, Homeowners of Encino President Gerald Silver said he would support this option for its potential to alleviate current traffic hazards.

"The two-lane southbound connector is essential, principally for safety reasons. During peak hours, traffic stands still transitioning to the northbound 101 while cars heading south on the 405 speed by. This creates a safety hazard

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Encino Neighborhood Council Election ♦ Banned Book Talk

ENCINO SUN

Gets Results!

"My first ad ran in the first issue — and the coupons came in starting the very first day."



— Sherry Katz,
Owner of Fantastic Sams
in Encino

TAPIA BROS. from page 1

is their biggest crop — the only one they send to market.

"We grow most all our vegetables: corn, tomatoes, beans, squash, peppers, cucumbers, whatever vegetable you see here, we grow ourselves," says Tom. The brothers lack an orchard of their own, but they insist on selling only locally grown tree fruit.

The farmstand is rustic and authentic, not kitschy. A cage of surprisingly beautiful roosters and a pheasant with vibrant feathers add to the countrified feel. Across Hayvenhurst, you can see 70 acres of farmland; the Tapias own another 30 acres at White Oak and Victory, as well as pumpkin fields near Lancaster.

For many families, Tapia Brothers is part of a holiday tradition. They come for Halloween pumpkin picking. And for the fire-roasted corn, cider and vintage farm wagons. A giant fiberglass pumpkin is a great photo op and is usually crawling with children. It doesn't stop there — the Tapias borrow animals from Antelope Valley ranches for a petting zoo, and even erect a spookhouse and maze.

In December, customers tramp through a forest of Christmas trees and sawdust, warming themselves with hot cocoa as they search for the perfect tree.

The Tapia family has been farming in the San Fernando Valley for three generations.

Tom Tapia grew up on the family ranch nearby (Lake Balboa sits there now), and he and his brothers graduated from Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks. Development squeezed them out, so they moved to Valencia — wide open land at the time. They lasted there 12 years, until Valencia grew. In 1984, Tom and Felix bought the present site, formerly Maria's Cornstand, built in the early 1970s.

Tom says people have offered to buy them out, but the Tapias don't own the land. It's part of the Sepulveda Basin flood control project and they lease it from the Army Corps of Engineers. The Sepulveda Basin is home to acres of parks, golf courses, bike paths, hiking trails and wetlands.

"Right now we're safe, because they can't do much development other than parks and golf courses. I think they've already built enough parks — for now," says Tom.

Being in a flood zone makes winter growing impossible. The cornfield at White Oak and Victory is nicknamed the "hole" because it fills up with water during winter rains. The water leaves the soil rich, but loaded with trash and debris carried by the Los Angeles River. "When the water recedes, we're stuck with Styrofoam cups, plastic...it's just a mess. It takes us days to clean it out, and

then we have to plow under," says Tom.

Pesticide regulations, water costs, and runoff water monitoring make it tough for the small farmer, he notes. Traffic is one of their biggest problems. "We've got to get out to the field early and when we try to bring our crops back over here to pack, just crossing the street here at



JIMMY HUSTON

Hayvenhurst is a nightmare."

Despite the drawbacks — and against the odds — the Tapias haven't given up their way of life.

"I'm an outdoors person. I would never want to sit at a desk or in front of a computer all day," Tom says. "You get a lot of satisfaction planting something, taking care of it, watching it grow, harvesting it and watching other people enjoy eating it."

Many customers have been coming to the farmstand since it was Maria's.

"It's wonderful!" enthuses Juliette Hamille, a customer for over 20 years. "It reminds me of the farm I grew up on in France." She looks wistfully across Hayvenhurst at the crops. "I like to watch them grow. I want to walk through their fields. I would love to go there and dig and plant."

Sadly, the next Tapia generation isn't interested in continuing the tradition. "Once we retire, that's it," says Tom. "I don't think anybody's going to follow in our footsteps. It's a tough business."

He surveys his fields with satisfaction. "It's a hard life. But it's a good life, too."

Tapia Brothers is open 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 9:00 to 5:00 or 6:00 on Sunday.



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