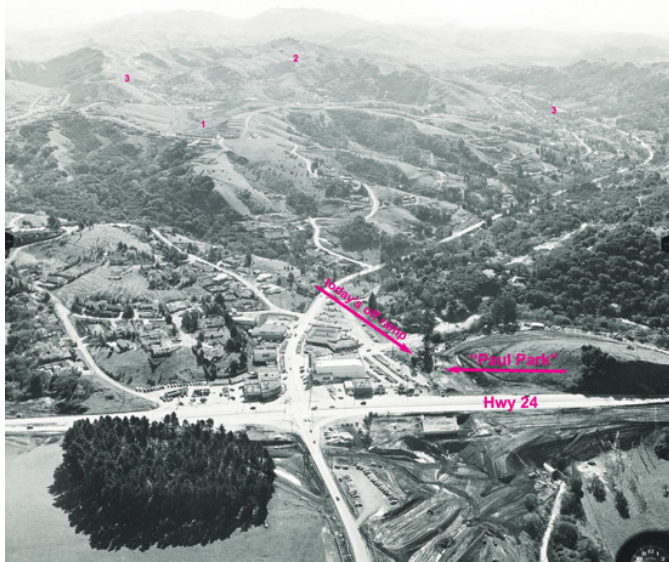


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## Paul Park - The Sequel: Readers Respond

Laurie Snyder



1 = Glorietta Elementary School 2 = Donald Dr., Mulholland Ridge 3 = Rheem Blvd. 4 = Glorietta Blvd. Courtesy of Department of Transportation

"It may live forever, however, somewhere in cyberspace." So ended the Lamorinda Weekly article July 4 about the mysterious strip of land near the Highway 24 Orinda off ramp, which had been wrongly designated as "Paul Park" on Google Maps.

This writer thought the case file was closed, but the saga continues thanks to the input of several diligent readers and history fans, including members of the Orinda Garden Club.

Jane Zuercher, a long-time Club member, dug through her files to unearth the history of OGC's improvement of the area next to the Highway 24 off ramp where "Paul Park" was alleged to have been located. "I hated the weedy look of the off ramp ... and worked with Cal Trans, the city and EBMUD for nearly a year before we even started clearing.... Janet Pease joined me on the beautification committee soon after, but Midge Zischke was also on the committee with me even before then when we spearheaded the project."

Zuercher reported the Club's project completion to collaborators as follows:

CIVIC BEAUTIFICATION  
HIGHWAY 24 OFFRAMP PROJECT

On July 12, 2001 a group of Garden Club members completed a beautification project on Caltrans land in downtown Orinda next to the Eastbound Highway 24 off ramp.

Two weedcutters were paid \$150; they worked approximately 2 hours. One of the men, Victor Ghavamzadh of Moraga ... is the owner of the business. They used a leafblower to clean up the perimeter of the areas after the weeds were cut.

The tree pruner, Christopher McMahon, worked for over 2 1/2 hours and was paid \$87.50. Members of the Garden Club cut the dead plum tree limbs into pieces of 6' or less as per Caltrans instructions.... We picked up trash (lots of paper and glass bottles), dug up weeds down to the root, cut and piled up the tree prunings, cut down two trees across the street (adjacent to the Eastbound onramp to Walnut Creek), cut ivy and blackberry roots, and pulled ivy away from the plum tree.

Caltrans provided orange Adopt-A-Highway vests, gloves, rakes, shovels, weedcutters, helmets, and sturdy plastic bags. The City of Orinda (specifically Mark Lowery in the Department of Public Works) loaned us 20 orange traffic cones for the morning....

In 2006, Zuercher "phoned home" with these additional details to the "mothership" of gardeners everywhere - the Garden Club of America:

"...a large group of members -including a few husbands - removed trees, weeds, invasive vines, ivy and trash from the site. A lovely, mature Cedrus deodara (deodar or Himalayan cedar) and two smaller trees were all that remained. The broken, antiquated irrigation system caught in a 'Catch-22' of highway funding necessitated some creative landscaping solutions. Our civic beautification committee decided that mulch and bulbs would greatly enhance the site and would not require irrigation. They subsequently arranged for the donation of 60 cubic yards of donated wood chips and nearly 1500 Narcissus 'King Alfred' (trumpet daffodil) bulbs. Additional bulbs and mulch have been added within the past several years, and weeding is done on an 'as needed' basis. Motorists, cyclists and others passing by on this heavily traveled route enjoy and greatly appreciate annually the glorious 'sea of yellow' during the often gloomy and rainy days of late winter and early spring."

So, when driving by "Paul Park," give silent thanks to the work of the orange-vested visionaries involved - Pat Winther, Janet Pease, Jane Zuercher, Jackie Voigt, Carole Amstutz, Diana Kennedy, Betty Argabright, Amy Worth, Janet Cotter, Dayna Taylor, DD Felton, John Winther, Andy Amstutz, and Norm Pease. Further improvements, including the addition of large boulders on the grounds, were made during the tenure of Conservation Co-Chairs Caroline Hayes and Judy Cortese.

As the poet Bessie Anderson Stanley wrote, their work reminds us that, "... to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition ... this is to have succeeded."

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