

History Comes Alive!

~ Tales From the City Archives ~



by Hynda Rudd
City Archivist (Retired) and Club Member



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BERLIN, GERMANY

Sister Cities

LA reaches out to the world through its quietly effective Sister Cities program.

From Hynda –

Dear Readers, please welcome this month's guest columnist, Eddy Feldman. He's a good friend, is an expert on Los Angeles and its past, and has written for *Alive!* before. I know you will enjoy his observations as much as I do.

– Hynda

By Eddy Feldman

Most of us don't usually have any impact on the relationships of our own country with any of the other countries on this planet. These relationships are usually initiated, developed and maintained by our nation's chief executive and his professional diplomats within the State and Defense and various other departments. As mere people – members of the community, rarely we do not have the opportunity to become involved in organized, sophisticated and positive ways directed to bringing about a more peaceful and fruitful society.

President Dwight D Eisenhower in 1956 sought to change this when he convened a White House conference on "citizen diplomacy" – that is, people-to-people contacts (with assistance from local governments) that encourage participants to promote peace through forming international partnerships that factor in economic development, cross-cultural exchange and global cooperation. Thus was born the sister cities movement, where a group of individuals in a city in the United States interested in these goals would strike up a meeting with a mirror image group in another country. However, in Los Angeles in spite of the 53 years of existence of the Sister Cities program, the benefits it produces are neither well known nor fully appreciated.

In 1959, the City of Los Angeles, with its wide diversity of population, numerous international contacts and ever-present energy, jumped aboard with Nagoya, Japan and Eilat, Israel as our first sister cities.

Avak Keotahian of the Chief Legislative Analyst's office described the selection process of a sister city in a 2006 memorandum:

"In selecting a sister city for Los Angeles, various criteria of suitability are used such as: similarities with Los Angeles (e.g., is there a harbor, are there economic and cultural exchange possibilities), the presence of a sizable community in Los Angeles of persons whose

original origin is in the proposed sister city, whether there is a dedicated group of persons willing to raise funds and work on the sister city program on a volunteer basis. Most importantly, it is necessary to determine that the proposed sister city already does not have a sister city relationship with any other city in the United States. Sister Cities International, the national organization which coordinates sister city programs, has a policy to not recognize, with rare exception, more than one sister city relationship between a foreign city and a city in the U.S. The City of Los Angeles also adheres to this policy."

Sister cities are established by City Council resolution. The programs for each sister city are operated by citizen committees whose appointments are confirmed by the City Council.

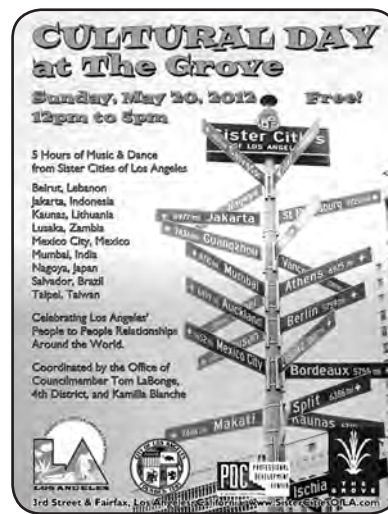
As the City of Los Angeles has so many sister cities currently (25 at last count) it is necessary to have a local coordinating body – in this case, Sister Cities of Los Angeles, Inc., which was incorporated in 1992. The Chairperson for many years and at present, is Fourth District Councilman Tom LaBonge, Club Member.



Mr. LA, Councilman Tom LaBonge, Club Member, spearheads the City's Sister Cities program.

The City does not provide any funding for its Sister Cities Program other than annual dues paid to Sister Cities International. All sister city committees do their own fundraising. The sister cities are listed here:

- Athens, Greece (Feb. 10, 1984);
- Auckland, New Zealand (1971);
- Beirut, Lebanon (June 20, 2006);
- Berlin, Germany (June 27, 1967);
- Bordeaux, France (May 26, 1964);



A poster from last month's Sister Cities celebration at the Grove.

- Busan, South Korea (April 5, 1971);
 - Eilat, Israel (June 18, 1959);
 - Giza, Egypt (Nov. 21, 1989);
 - Guangzhou, China (Dec. 6, 1981);
 - Ischia, Italy (Nov. 8, 2006);
 - Jakarta, Indonesia (Dec. 24, 1990);
 - Kaunas, Lithuania (June 20, 1991);
 - Lusaka, Zambia (May 7, 1968);
 - Makati, Philippines (Jan. 28, 1992);
 - Mexico City, Mexico (Dec. 11, 1969);
 - Mumbai, India (June 1, 1972);
 - Nagoya, Japan (March 31, 1959);
 - St. Petersburg, Russia (Dec. 8, 1989);
 - Salvador, Brazil (April 26, 1962);
 - San Salvador, El Salvador (Jan. 26, 2005);
 - Split, Croatia (June 9, 1993);
 - Taipei, Taiwan (May 18, 1979);
 - Tehran, Iran (May 26, 1972, suspended);
 - Vancouver, Canada (June 23, 1986);
 - Yerevan, Armenia (Feb. 23, 2007).
- There are also two Friendship Cities: Lodz, Poland, and London, U.K.

As might be expected, some of the committees are more active than others. Some, like Auckland, Beirut, Berlin, Bussan, Guangzhou and St. Petersburg, have their own Websites and carry on elaborate programs promoting international peace, trade and cultural exchange. Others have periodic celebrations that recall the pleasures (or pains) of the home country and raise funds to carry on the good work. Public officials of sister cities invariably visit City Hall in association with their sister cities committees and are especially recognized by the City Council. Technicians vital to governing are welcomed by their twinned cities' staffs as well as by their sister cities committees.

On Sept. 27, 2001, Sister Cities of Los Angeles held its annual Gala Celebration at the Gilmore Adobe at the Farmers Market at Third and Fairfax honoring the Consular Corps of Los Angeles and Stelle Feuers for her many years of leadership service to the organization. The latest annual Gala Celebration was held last month at the Farmer's Market. The event recognized several Sister City anniversaries – the 50th anniversary of the program with Salvador, Brazil; the 45th anniversaries with Busan, Korea, and Berlin, Germany; and the 40th anniversary with Mumbai, India.

In a recent interview, Councilman LaBonge expressed a personal reason for his enthusiasm in energizing our sister cities program: "Basically, I want people to be self-starters and figure it out themselves, and raise money and help expose other people to this program. You know, raise money to bring children, young adults here! Student exchanges! Professional exchanges! Help people, like we were helped. Somebody helped me when I was traveling in Europe 30 years ago, so I go out of my way to try to help somebody now."

About the Author

Eddy S. Feldman, 92, is a retired attorney in Los Angeles. He has been involved in many legal issues at the local, state and national levels. From 1947 to 1974, Eddy had managerial positions with the Furniture Manufacturers Association of California, becoming the Managing Director of what became the current Los Angeles Mart. From 1961 to 1975, Mr. Feldman served as member and president of the City of Los Angeles Municipal Arts Department Commissioners, precursor to the Cultural Affairs Department. He is a member of the Los Angeles City Historical Society and wrote the 1972 book, "The Art of Street Lighting in Los Angeles," which is still available (used) on Amazon.com

