Modern Patrons

The Modern Patrons series continues in May and June with events in Ojai and Orange. The informal talks and tours take place on Saturday, from 2PM to 4:30PM. The events are $10 each, and are open to Life and Patron-level members of the SAH/SCC (the program will be available to the general membership only in the event there is space available). If you are a Life member or Patron and would like to attend, fill out and mail the order form on the back page. Space is limited.

Walker in Ojai
Saturday, May 18th

On May 18th, we will visit the Ojai residence that Rodney Walker designed for his family in 1958. We'll spend the afternoon experiencing springtime in the delightful Ojai valley with the architect's son Craig Walker, and learning about the house and Rodney Walker's legacy of buildings in Southern California.


"Throughout his architectural career, Rodney Walker remained true to the goals of experimenting with new cost-saving materials in aesthetically innovative, modern structures. He was an architect who entered fully into the building process, not only designing and supervising, but actually participating in the construction of most of his buildings with his workmen.

"Walker, born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1910, spent his early years in Ely, Nevada. He attended Pasadena City College to study engineering, then studied art and mechanical arts at the University of California, Los Angeles, having received an athletic scholarship for track. With his wife, Dorothea, whom he met at UCLA, Walker designed and built his first house in 1937 in Los Angeles.

"John Entenza invited Walker to participate in the Case Study program after seeing the architect's 1946 home for himself and his wife in the hills above Beverly Hills, which became Case Study #16 (1946-47). Walker soon completed two more Case Studies, #17 (1947) and #18 (1947-48).

"In 1955, Rodney and Dorothea Walker moved to Ojai, where he bought an old house and remodeled it, winning second prize in the Better Homes & Gardens remodeling competition. By 1958 he had built another home for his family - a remarkable steel and glass hexagon overlooking the Ojai valley."

Our afternoon at the Walker residence will be an opportunity to experience the house, learn a great deal more about the architect firsthand and share the perspective of the architect's son, who continues to live in the house.

Eichler in Orange
Saturday, June 15th

On June 15th, we will visit with Fran Kams, an original Eichler homeowner in the Fairhills tract near the city of Orange in Orange County. As an extension of the SAH/SCC "Modernism for the Masses" tour held last Fall, we will gain an interesting perspective of the Eichler lifestyle from an original homeowner, whose house was constructed in 1964.

From his essay "Eichler Homes: A Popular Modernism," author and noted Eichler expert Paul Adamson writes of the experiment of bringing modern architecture successfully to suburbia:

"Eichler homes are a particularly brave attempt to bring architecture of critically pure ideology and good aesthetic taste to the popular marketplace. The Eichlers were originally developed during a period of high demand, so the developer for whom the houses are named, Joseph Eichler, was going to far more effort than was required to sell houses. Modernist attempts at housing have rarely been tried in the U.S. because developers know they are unlikely to be popular. Yet, contrary to the popular wisdom of the time, Joseph Eichler hired a group of progressive California architects - A. Quincy Jones, Frederick Emmons, Robert Arentz, Steven Allen, and Claude Oakland - to design house prototypes from which he built nearly twelve thousand unabashedly Modernist homes and several boldly progressive apartment buildings. For nearly 20 years the Eichler Homes Company was successful, gaining national and international acclaim. By the time of Eichler's death in 1974 ideas about modest Modernism had begun to give way to the popular desire for tradition and luxury, and (unfortunately) the concept of a popular Modernism died with him."

Our afternoon visiting in Orange County will let us experience the ideas of modern architectural relevance, as well as the evolution of the Eichler "way of life" through the thoughts and feelings of a remarkable individual.
President's Letter

Those of us who harbor a passion for Southern California's modern architecture have been reminded that preservation includes joy and suffering. Following the shocking losses of Schindler's Packard House and his Wolfe House, which I reported in the past two issues of this newsletter, we have been searching for answers, and struggling to find a way to move forward constructively.

Now, in the midst of our introspection, a coming clean to the gut. Richard Neutra's Maslon House (Rancho Mirage, 1967) was unexpectedly demolished in late March. The Maslon House, which was located at the Tamarkin Country Club, was one of three houses Neutra designed in the Palm Springs area. The others were the 1946 Kaufmann House and the 1937 Miller House.

Peter Munro, the chairman of the Palm Springs Modern Committee, informs me that the Maslon house had recently sold for $2.45 million, closing escrow February 28th. The buyers were Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Rotenberg of Hopkins, Minnesota. The real estate agent, Denrire Coit, allegedly conducted the transaction with the knowledge the house would be destroyed. The buyers were granted a demolition permit by the City of Rancho Mirage on Thursday March 21st. Demolitions in that city require no review and are issued the same day, over the counter.

Mr. Munro said, "Even in 2002, the iconic work of a world-renowned architect such as Richard Neutra can be destroyed through an over-the-counter action in many-American cities. No public comment. No public review. This is an outrage that must be corrected." Without proper governmental reviews, what is the preservation community to do? Stake out each permit office, inspecting each transaction? Set up remote cameras at each courthouse, monitored at some kind of "modern architecture command control?" Chase bulldozers? Ridiculous! After all, this is supposed to be an enlightened society. We depend on the responsible agencies—local governments—to be educated and responsive to the public interest. Apparently, in Rancho Mirage, San Marino, and Avalon, the public interest is controlled by apathy.

Michael J. Lewis in the New York Times put it this way: "For pedestrian cities like New York, architecture has always had a civic dimension, and been part of public life. But in desert cities like Rancho Mirage, where the Maslon house stood—retro or the artificial desert of America's newest suburban tracts—the laissez faire tradition survives unchallenged. A man's home remains his castle, which includes, for the time being, the right to knock it into the moat."

In my last column, I questioned the reincarnation of the Los Angeles Times and the Los Angeles Conservancy in their responses to losses of the Schindler house. Since then, I have had excellent conversations with both Nicolai Ouroussoff, the Times' architectural critic, and Ken Bernstein, Director of Preservation Issues at the Conservancy. Mr Bernstein requested to clarify his position in a letter to our readers, and it is printed below.

Although the SAH/SCC is not primarily dedicated to preservation, we are convinced that these mounting losses warrant a larger public discussion. Rather than assign blame, or throwing our hands in the air we want to act constructively. In this spirit, we are organizing a "Preservation Summit," a kind of town-hall meeting to discuss the current state of preservation efforts in Southern California. We are planning this event for the summer—July or August—to be an hour-long, one-hour, Historic-Examiner building. I would like to invite Mr. Munro, Mr. Ouroussoff, and Mr. Bernstein to participate. We would also welcome suggestions, as well as organizational help, from our members.

Anthony Denzer

Letter to the Members

The past two issues of the SAH/SCC News have contained a "President's Letter" criticizing the Los Angeles Conservancy's perceived silence over the destruction of two significant Modern houses by R.M. Schindler: the Packard House in San Marino and the Wolfe House in Avalon on Catalina Island. Since the Conservancy has been every bit as outraged about these demolitions, I wanted to take the opportunity to inform you of what we've learned about these events.

The Conservancy works to monitor thousands of historic resources not only in the sprawling City of Los Angeles, but also in the 88 separate municipalities of Los Angeles County. We therefore must rely heavily on our members and local residents to let us know when buildings are threatened. Usually we do receive warnings and tips about outrages in the Los Angeles region, but also in the 88 separate municipalities of Los Angeles County. We therefore must rely heavily on our members and local residents to let us know when buildings are threatened. Usually we do receive warnings and tips about these events.

In the aftermath of the losses of Schindler's Packard House and his Wolfe House, which I reported in the past two issues of this newsletter, we have been searching for answers, and struggling to find a way to move forward constructively. The Los Angeles Conservancy has been every bit as outraged about these demolitions, I wanted to take the opportunity to inform you of what we've learned about these events.

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Anthony Denzer

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SAH/SCC NEWS is published bi-monthly by the Society of Architectural Historians / Southern California Chapter. Subscription is a benefit of membership and provides members with one of the most comprehensive calendars of architectural events in Southern California and advance notice of exclusive SAH/SCC architectural events and tours.

Editor: Julie D. Taylor
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Information and ads for the newsletter should be sent three weeks before the issue date

Issue Deadline: July/August 2002

Please send all ad materials, notices of events, exhibitions and news to the attention of the editor

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Because nothing could undo the demolitions, the Conservancy has focused on using these events as an opportunity to educate local governments on their responsibilities to safeguard historic properties. We informed Avalon's planners that they had approved demolition without properly applying the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prior to demolition. Their local officials have all had to work with Schindler and Neutra in their municipalities, citing these recent demolitions and urging them to treat these buildings as potential historic resources under CEQA should they become threatened.

These shocking demolitions are also a poignant reminder that all of us—SAH/SCC members, Conservancy members, and concerned local residents—need to remain vigilant and work together closely to keep each other informed of potential preservation threats. Before it is too late.

Ken Bernstein
Director of Preservation Issues, Los Angeles Conservancy
1. Wednesday
Post-War and Contemporary Art
Lecture by Christ joyful Report, Pacific Design Center, 8677 Melrose Ave., LA; 10AM; res. req. 310.657.0800.
p-d-c.com.

2. Wednesday
Fracturing Perspectives.
Short films exploring alternative approaches to standard perspective problems by Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, and Emir Gehr. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr, LA; 5PM; res. req. 310.440.7300. getty.edu.

2. Thursday
Reflections on Anamorphosis: The Space in/out the Mirror.
Lecture with Northwestern University art history professor Lisa Mackay.
The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr, LA; 4PM; res. req. 310.440.7300. getty.edu.

2, 30, Thursday, 5, Sunday
Building Green: Towards Sustainable Architecture.
workshop with architect Robert Fleis and Green Map developer Isabelle Davier.
Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd, SM; 8:45AM-3:30PM, $20-30; res. req. 310.574.4389. santamonica.edu.

3, Friday
Day-long program. UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design, 1302 Perforl Hall, UCLA; 10AM-6PM.
310.625.7857. uclaextension.org.

3, Friday
Painting With Light or With Geometry?
Lecture by William H. Snavely
Lecture with University of Oxford art history professor Martin Kemp.
J. Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr, LA; 7:30PM.
res. req. 310.440.7300. getty.edu.

3, Friday
Venice at 150 Years.
Historical walk by Gary L. Holland.
Oak and 10th Sts., Oakland; 3PM; $5-10; res. req. 510.841.2242. calhist.org.

4, Saturday
Tuscan-inspired dinner.
Versailles House Tour.
Annual spring House Tour featuring designs by Julia Morgan and others.
BERLEYSMuseum at 150 Years.
Brentwood Garden Tour.
Five gardens and plant sale.

4, Saturday
BAHA House Tour.
Lecture with art director for Ani-Motion.
310.625.7857. uclaextension.org.

5, Sunday
Chamber Music in Historic Sites: Vegas String Quartet.
Music at Harvey Aluminum House, designed by John Lautner (1950). The Da Camera Society.
Harvey Aluminum House, LA; 2PM and 3:30PM; $70, res. req. 213.477.2392.

5, Sunday
Introduction to Planting Materials.
Workshop on softscape with Charlotte Chen.
Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd, SM; 9AM-2PM; $40; res. req. 310.434.3490. events.smc.edu.

6, Monday
Preston Scott Cohen Studio Work.
Opening reception for exhibition. UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design, 1318 Perforl Gallery, UCLA; 6-8PM.
res. req. 310.625.7857. uclaextension.org.

6, Monday
Light Dining.
Program on restaurant lighting design.
Designers Lighting Forum; 7PM.
310.535.0150. dlfa.org.

6, Monday
Ayse Birsel.
Lecture with industrial designer.
SFMOMA.
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.
7PM. 415.978.2767. sfmoma.org.

7, Tuesday
Rancho San Miguel: A San Francisco Neighborhood History.
Lecture with writer and San Francisco Historical Society founding director.
Mae Silver.
California Historical Society, 678 Mission St, SF; 5:30PM-7PM.
415.357.1648 x 24. calhist.org.

7, Tuesday
Chapel Hill, and other significant architectural works, with architect Leo Marmol and structural engineer Robert Silman. LAMYSV School of Architecture, 1302 Perforl Hall, UCLA; 6-8PM.

8, Wednesday
Good Design/ Good Business.
Presentation at an architectural office.

9, Thursday
The Evolution of the Book: Societal Forces and Technological Advancements.
Lecture with California Center for the Book director.
Dr. Sidney Berger.

10, Friday
Point of View: Sacred Spaces.
Discussion with painter and designer of 37 tapestries for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. John Nava.
J. Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr, LA; 6PM and 7:30PM; res. req. 310.440.7300. getty.edu.

11, Saturday
A Day in Florence.
Lecture in English.
San Francisco Yacht Club, Belvedere.
Farr Cottages and the China Cabin.
Restored Berryessa Adobe.

18, Saturday
Modern Patrons.
A visit to the Walker residence in Ojai designed by Rockefeller.
Y4ft at Work Demonstrations.
Crop planting and design at the Ojai designed by Rodney Walker.
2-4:30 PM.
res. req. 800.95AHSCC.
See Page 11 for details

19, Friday-Sunday
San Diego Modernism.
Weekend of tours and lectures on historic and contemporary Modernist sites, with architect Loo Marmol and Palm Springs Historic Site Foundation vice president Tony Merchell. MAK Center for Art and Architecture; res. req. 323.851.1510.

19, Friday-Sunday
Sydneytown.
History walkabout with Australian neighborhood with Gary L. Holland.
California Historical Society, 10AM and 2PM; $15-20; res. req. 415.357.1848. calhist.org.

18, Saturday
Restored Berryessa Adobe.
Tour of historic adobe. Santa Clara.
408.615.2210
18, Saturday

Are A: A Search for Regional Identity.
Slide talk with architect and urban designer Hector Reyes. Friends of San Diego Architecture; Newschool of Design, 1249 F St., SD; 9:30-11:30 AM.

Saturday

Diego Architecture; Newschool of Design, 1249 F St., SD; 9:30-11:30 AM.

18. Saturday

18. Saturday


19, Sunday

AIA/Los Angeles Home Tour.
AIA/LA; res. req. 310.838.0777. aialosangeles.org

19, Sunday

Downtown LA: Where Design Hits the Road.
Downtown celebration of architecture with tours, block party, authors' talks, exhibits, children's activities, silent auction. LA Architect Magazine, Traction Ave. between 3rd and Merrick Sts., park at SG-Arc; 11AM-5PM. 818.515.1073.

19, Sunday

Santa Barbara Style.
Historic homes tour: Pearl Chase Society, Santa Barbara; 11AM-4PM; $35; res. req. 805.961.3098.

19, Sunday

Life in the Past Lane Festival.
Annual festival of Amoy Seco Museums: The Gamble House, Heritage Square, Lummis Home and Garden, the Pasadena Historical, and Southwest Museum. 11AM-5PM. 213.740.8867.

19, Sunday

Chamber Music in Historic Sites:
Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. Eclectic program at Farmers and Merchants Bank, designed by Morgan and Walls (1904). The Da Camera Society; Farmers and Merchants Bank, LA; 3PM; $35-41; res. req. 213.477.2927.

20, Monday

Ross Lovegrove.
Lecture with furniture designer. UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design, 1236 Perkins Hall, UCLA; 6:30PM. 310.825.7857. uclawww.ucla.edu

20, Monday

Jelly Helm, Advertising Guru.
Lecture with former creative director of advertising firms Wieden and Kennedy and The Martin Agency, David "Jelly" Helm. SFMOMA; Yerb Buena Center for the Arts Theater, 700 Howard St., SF; 7:30PM; $15-20. 415.978.2787. sfmoma.org

21, Tuesday

Introduction to Feng Shui.
Class with Katari Diamond. Santa Monica College, John Adams Middle School, 5M; 6:30-9:30PM; $45; res. req. 310.434.3648. events.smc.edu

23, Thursday

Beyond Pension Risks.
Lecture with rug experts on design, weaving and purchasing. Pacific Design Center, 8887 Melrose Ave., LA; 11AM; res. req. 310.657.0800; p-d-c.com

23, Thursday

Master of Architecture Lecture: Peter Pan.
Sponsored by AIA/LA and LACMA. Los Angeles County Museum of Art; 5055 Wilshire Blvd., LA; 3:30PM; $5-12; res. req. 323.857.6010. aialosangeles.org

23, Thursday

Making Santa Monica a More Sustainable City.
Lecture with Santa Monica city environmental staff. Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd., SM; 8PM. 310.434.3400. events.smc.edu

28, Tuesday

Tour of Frank Lloyd Wright house.
Tour of early 1900 homes. Redondo Beach Historical Society, 10AM-4PM; $12.50-15; res. req. 310.372.9197.

3, Monday

Camilo Vergara.
Lecture with photographer and architectural historian. SFMOMA; Yerb Buena Center for the Arts Theater, 700 Howard St., SF; 7:30PM; $15-20. 415.978.2787. sfmoma.org

4, Tuesday

Victorian Glory in San Francisco and the Bay Area.
Lecture with author, interior designer, and San Francisco resident Paul Dachshener. California Historical Society, 676 Mission St., SF; 5:30-7PM. 415.357.1848 x24. calhist.org

5, Wednesday

Lecture with World Wide Print. Pacific Design Center, 8887 Melrose Ave., LA; 10AM; res. req. 310.657.0800. p-d-c.com

6, Thursday

Can Neighborhoods Save LA and Santa Monica?
Lecture with former Santa Monica Mayor Jim Cerm and Fico Improvement chair Jim Steigebing. Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd., SM; 8PM. 310.434.3400. events.smc.edu.

8, Saturday

A. Quincy Jones.
Book signing by author and architect Cory Buckner. Form Zero Architectural Books + Gallery, 811 Traction Ave., LA; 2-4PM. 213.745.4900. forzero.com

8, Saturday

From Modest to Masterpiece:
The Architecture of Sylvanus Marston (1883-1946). Bus tour of more than 30 buildings, including interior visits to private residences. Pasadena Heritage; $35-40; res. req. 626.441.6333. pasadenaheritage.org

10, Monday

On-site tour from Hollywood to Downtown with Gayle Gale. Santa Monica College; Hollywood/Vine Station; 10:30AM-4:30PM; $30; res. req. 310.434.3400. events.smc.edu

10, Monday

Light as Art.
Program at the Museum of Neon Art. Designers Lighting Forum. 7PM. 310.535.0105. dfla.org

15, Saturday

Point of View: Sacred Spaces.
Talk with architect John Ruble, FAIA, J. Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr., LA; 8PM and 7:30PM; res. req. 310.440.7300. getty.edu

20, Monday

Charles Anderson.
Lecture with graphic designer. SFMOMA; Yerb Buena Center for the Arts Theater, 700 Howard St., SF; 7:30PM; $15-20. 415.978.2787. sfmoma.org

23, Thursday

Russian California.
Bus tour of Russian neighborhoods in Marin, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties with Gary L. Holloway. California Historical Society, SF; 8AM; $95-115; res. req. 415.357.1848. californiastoricalsociety.org

23, Sunday

Creating "Blueprints" for a Successful Presentation.
Lecture with Leonard Lipton. UCLA Extension, J, Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr., LA; 7PM; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaextension.org

23, Sunday

Painting with Light.
The Stained Glass Art of the Judson Studios. Lecture with Jane Apostol. The Los Angeles City Historical Society; Russian Central Library, Mark Taper Auditorium. 2PM. 213.228.7400.

27, Thursday

England's Green and Pleasant Land.
Recent Experiments to Link Building Conservation With the Wider Field of Environmental Sustainability.
Lecture with English Heritage U.K.'s head of Building Conservation and Research, J. Paul Getty Museum, 1200 Getty Center Dr., LA; 7PM; res. req. 310.440.7300. getty.edu
The double meaning of the title refers to the up and down reputation of the late Richard J. Neutra, as well as to the vital ideas in his book Survival Through Design. There is a third matter I wish to explore more thoroughly. It is the way he used his sensitive readings of his own physiological responses to produce emotionally satisfying environments for his cherished clients.

While I was a first-year apprentice, Neutra and I read and discussed passages from his manuscript of Survival Through Design. He was interested in checking the clarity of his meanings. In spite of this, it is a difficult book for me, but it needs to be gleaned for the multitude of ideas and meanings flowing from his educative mind. The prevailing concept of a creative person is one who spews constant ideas, only a few of which are good ones. Neutra seemed to have an early warning device for bad ideas. He could focus and instantly see implications. Thus he was at his best as a creative integrator, and he used this ability to the fullest. This valuable trait could be fostered today by a better "press" for it.

Briefly, the larger meaning of the book is that we know that stress kills; we constantly change our environment to one we are not adaptable to, and this added stress can destroy individuals and even our own species in unforeseen ways.

I have long called serenity the essence of his buildings. I knew it had to do with an emotional balance. Yet it is only since we know about neurotransmitters in the brain that there are some working explanations of its nature. Today he would have scientific backing for his intuition, which he based on observing his own balancing act. He knew adrenaline well and said that rage can make one's intelligence instantly unavailable.

He was always aware of the latest scientific findings, especially those concerning humans. He would now be able to say that communing with nature raises one's serotonin level. As I understand it, a balance of serotonin with norepinephrine allows us to use the latter to see stress as adventure instead of anxiety, and it helps prevent the bad side of adrenaline. Is this perhaps the state of maximum creativity?

The impact of the environments he designed did not come from a static quality of symmetry, grids, or fenestration that is all the same. Rather, they had a subtle stimulating directionalism, producing a quiet exhilaration to balance and interact with the serenity. Clients would report that even the memory of their home could bring a sense of peace.

In his residences, the family and social areas and as many other rooms as possible opened to nature. When there was no view these rooms would open to a garden. The neighbors were promptly "planted out" with small dense and fast growing eucalyptus compacta. The dark silhouette of any telephone pole was essentially obscured by a clean willow lemon eucalyptus or two. The result was one's own Eden. It is strange that the desire for this is popularly under fire. Such a personal discovery, but also the purpose of the environment is that of maximizing creativity.

Neutra was of a different kind, who had his own intentions, often at odds with other modernists. He faithfully implemented his insights. Not only his artistry has potential for personal discovery, but also the purpose of the artistry served. Discovering for oneself can be the best kind of art appreciation.

John Blanton started his architectural career apprenticing for Richard Neutra in 1952, and grew to the title of Collaborator on such projects as Eagle Rock Community Building, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, and Gemological Institute in Brentwood, among many others. He started his own firm in 1984 and has received numerous awards and publication for his work. Among the institutions where he has presented and taught are the Monterey Design Conference, UCLA Extension, and the LA Conservancy.
The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura: 29-page guide, at $10 each

Modernism for the Masses: three-fold brochure with inserts of detailed floorplans of Eichler homes visited on the tour to Orange County, at $10 each members, $15 each non-members

Cool Pools: Booklet and cassette tape from "Reflections on Water: Cool Pools Along Sunset Boulevard," at $10 each members, $15 each non-members


Reconsidering Lloyd Wright: 21-page, four color booklet from "Reconsidering Lloyd Wright House Tour," at $10 each

Union Station and MTA Transit Center: A two-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos, at $2 each

Spanish Romance: Tour brochure of San Marino and Pasadena, visiting historic landmarks such as the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, El Molino Viejo, Mrs. Eichler Guthrie's House, and Mrs. Grace A. Ohimund's House, at $2 each

Eagle Rock - LA's Home Town: 17-page handbook with history and self-guided tour of Eagle Rock, by Jeff Samudio, at $4 each

David Gebhard Annual Review: Essays on the Works Project Administration by Robert W. Winter, Orville O. Clarke, Jr, and Mitzi March Mogul, at $5 each

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