

HERITAGE
Vancouver
N e w s l e t t e r



Tiki Talk

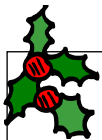
There are amazing things on Hastings Street, many of them surreal. One of the most surreal has to be the enclave of Polynesian rooms hidden within the street's Waldorf Hotel. Even those who know the rooms still exist are surprised again when they enter this preserved bit of the 1950's with the bamboo walls and fake palms and curving bars and lush murals and the tiki carvings... and all the bits of excess that make these rooms so wonderful and so evocative of an earlier time.

The rooms remain untrashed, as it were, spared the descent into tiki-tackiness and kitsch which has turned other tiki rooms into places you'd rather not go to, never mind dress up for, spared by changing ideas and economic realities. They are much as they ever were, and while it is a long way from authentic South Seas religion and culture to this vision of 50's chic, it's an even longer way to bad art on garish mugs or tiki light switch covers (which is what the tikis in the photographs actually are). Tiki

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The Vancouver Heritage Foundation
Wednesday, November 20, 7:30pm
The Vancouver Museum

Michael Kluckner, Chair of the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, and noted artist and writer, will be talking about his group and its role in the heritage community. This is a good opportunity to find out about the programs the Foundation offers, including *True Colours and Restore It*, and to get a more comprehensive picture of heritage advocacy in our city. Members free, non-members \$5.



Christmas Party
Wednesday, December 18,
6 to 9pm
Roedde House Museum,
1415 Barclay Street

The Executive and Board of Directors of HV request the pleasure of your company at the 2002 Christmas Party. Roedde House is the perfect place to celebrate the festive season while we mix and mingle and eat and drink—just ask everyone who was there last year!

RSVP to 604-254-9411
if attending.

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Evelyn Harris a Vancouver Treasure

by Imbi Harding

Evelyn Harris, who was born in Vancouver on October 19, 1913, died at Vancouver Hospital on October 13, 2002, just a week before her 89th birthday.

Everyone in the heritage community knew Evelyn as the ever-charming owner of 1210 Lakewood Drive in Strathcona. The Harris family bought the house, built in 1908, from the original owners in 1919 when Evelyn was just a young girl. She resided there for the rest of her life, retaining the house and everything in it just as it was in 1919. She was a most remarkable person in that she was able to maintain the past in her house, yet she herself, in her 89 years of life, lived very much in the present.

Evelyn Harris created her own little universe on Lakewood Drive. She enjoyed her garden and the opportunity it provided her to talk to everyone who happened to come by. She was the living memory of the whole community and the neighbourhood historian, the one who introduced newcomers to the community. Though she never had children of her own, Evelyn entertained generations of neighbourhood children who adored her, her stories, and her Rice Krispie squares. She also took part in the *Seniors at*

School at Lord Nelson Elementary, where she herself had gone to school, telling the youngsters these stories of her experiences.

Evelyn also ventured further afield. She had a large circle of friends, both in her neighbourhood and throughout Vancouver. She thought nothing of getting on a bus and going all over the city. In fact, some of her friends think that an appropriate memorial for Evelyn might be a bench at a bus stop. Her big thing was the *Evelyn Event*, which she organized as a quarterly lunch meeting for women named Evelyn. She regularly attended the tea dances at Aberthau, where she danced gracefully, and she enjoyed getting together with other seniors to tell stories with the *Tale Spinners* at Barclay Manor.

Evelyn Harris was truly a Vancouver treasure.

Her beloved home, caught at a moment in 1919, is Evelyn's true memorial. The house at 1210 Lakewood is now on the market. If you know of anyone who is interested in owning and loving a charming heritage home as much as Evelyn loved it they can contact Linda Fong Kenny at 604-263-8800.



Roger Kemble's colourful iconoclasm

by *Robert Moffatt*

Roger Kemble was a counter-culture radical on Vancouver's architecture scene in the 1960s and 70s, as well-known for his boldly controversial views on the practice of architecture as he was for his often startling houses.

Born in Yorkshire, England, Kemble established his own firm in 1960. His early Vancouver houses were influenced by Japanese domestic architecture, and characterized by steep roofs swooping downward before flaring up at the eaves. He won two Massey Medals in 1964



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for his West and MacDonald houses in West Vancouver, then underwent a creative epiphany. "To copy from Japan seemed incongruous," he wrote in 1972. "While Japanese architecture stands immaculate, full of grace and beauty, it is still the product of a very brutal and structured social regime. What we interpreted as serenity was, I felt, repression. And so it became necessary to embark on a voyage of discovery."

Kemble's voyage of discovery led diametrically away from the woody post-and-beam idiom of the day. Beginning

in the mid-1960s, he designed a series of shockingly bold plywood-box houses finished in eye-popping colour combinations. His 1967 house for the Milne family (4408 Magnolia Drive, Vancouver) sported a dazzling combination of green-gold and deep scarlet, his 1970 Gray house (6555 Nelson Avenue, West

Vancouver) was French blue and bright yellow, and his Culhane house of 1974 (4768 Eastridge Road, North Vancouver) was a blazing red-orange. All were riotously colourful counterpoints to the predominately sombre greens and grays of the misty West Coast envi-

ronment. The houses were structurally innovative, too: plywood was laid over conventional framing and sealed with a neoprene hypalon coating, the plywood functioning as a sheathing membrane and as a structural stressed skin.

The Culhane house was one of Kemble's most radical designs, a sculptural triangle perched on a rock bluff high above Indian Arm and overlooking an incredible view of mountains, sea, and sky. Interior spaces flowed through six interlocking levels, drenched with natural light from the

sloping slot windows. The house was an immediate sensation and was widely published in Canada and abroad.

Time hasn't been kind to Kemble's creations, however. The Culhane house has been demolished, as has the MacDonald house; the Milne and Gray houses have been

reskinned with wood siding and have suffered other alterations. His early West house at 6485 Madrona Crescent in West Vancouver does remain in largely original condition. Kemble himself

has become increasingly involved in urban planning over the years, authoring the 1989 book *The Canadian City: From Saint John's to Victoria, A Critical Commentary*. He currently lives in Nanaimo.

1. Culhane house, 1974

2. Milne house, 1967

3. Gray house, 1970



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A Commitment to Heritage

Dear Members,

Heritage Vancouver reaffirmed its commitment to Vancouver's heritage at our AGM in October. I am pleased to take on the role of President and pick up where Janet Leduc left off. Following in her footsteps will not be easy, but I will endeavour to keep heritage in the spotlight as Janet has done for the last two years. Thanks also go out to Art Perret, former Vice President and Programming Chair, for all his hard work, and to Hillary Haggan for administrative support.

Our society has an active and ongoing role in Vancouver's heritage community and it shows in everything we do. In November, members received an e-mail notice about our official endorsements for City Council and Mayoral candidates. We continue to advocate for the preservation of the Burrard Street Bridge, and now Woodward's is becoming a priority for many advocacy groups, including ours.

The former department store is once again in the news. The debate is around housing in the downtown eastside, but the Woodward's building is also an important part of the larger neighbourhood. Its restoration can provide a vital link between Chinatown and Gastown as well as providing for residents of the area. Heritage Vancouver will be supporting any revitalization and restoration work proposed to department store, and will advocate for the highest level of conservation.

Our conservation efforts regarding the Burrard Bridge have found us participating at the city level and standing steadfast in our commitment to retain and preserve the bridge's heritage fabric. This will be ongoing with our new board and the new City Council.

I look forward to working with all of you to help preserve Vancouver's unique heritage.



Scott Barrett:
President, Heritage Vancouver

from cover **Tiki**

rooms today are most often tacky, but it is still possible to imagine—or remember—dining and dancing at the Waldorf.



The architecture and decoration of the Polynesian Room and its Tahitian Lounge and Menehune Banquet Room are striking enough that it rates three and a half Tikis (out of a possible five) on the Tikibar Review, a website published by a tikibar aficionado who has seen it all. This expert was especially thrilled by the authentic Leeteg paintings (Edgar Leeteg is known as the father of modern velvet painting), and by a life-size mural showing the discovery of Hawaii that covers an entire wall. He also liked the curved wall of aqua-colored glass that gives the glow of the Pacific Ocean to the room.

The rooms are well worth a visit and, if all goes well, Heritage Vancouver members will soon have an opportunity to see the Polynesian Room. Be ready; check out your mai tai recipes.