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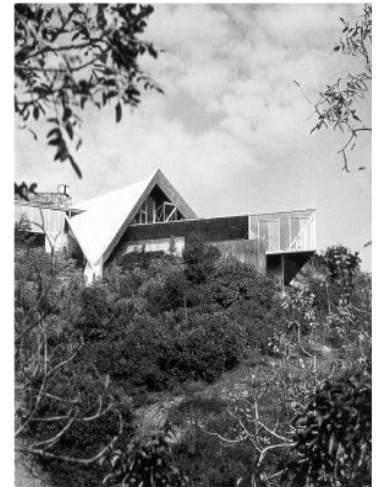
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## Celebrate John Lautner's 90th Birthday October 13-14 Lautner home owners offer homes for tour, symposium

The second annual Foundation event centers on the year 2001, 90 years after John Lautner's birth. For this notable year, the Foundation is pleased to offer a tour of four Lautner hillside homes plus a symposium and reception at the beautiful home originally built for Leo Harvey, the "poptop king", now lovingly restored by Kelly Lynch and Mitch Glazer.

The tour will feature the Walstrom, Concannon, Sheats/Goldstein, and Schwimmer homes. Guests will board vans in a central parking area to take the tour, expected to last about three hours, on Saturday, October 13. Vans will leave at staggered times starting at 10 a.m. and return no later than 3:30 p.m.

The celebration symposium will take place at the Harvey house on Sunday, October 14, from 3:00 p.m. to about 6:00 p.m. Guests on the panel include Lynch and Glazer, Helena Arahuete, architect for the restoration, John de la Veaux, original contractor, Robin Poirier, restoration contractor, and Louis Wiehle, early Lautner associate.



See how the stunning Sheats residence has evolved from how it looked in this early photo by Julius Shulman

Announcements have been mailed to Foundation members, containing details of the event and reservation information. Information is also available on the Foundation website at:

<http://www.johnlautner.org/event2.html>

The Foundation is grateful to the gracious home owners who are making this event possible.

## Foundation's inaugural event at Silvertop

The first annual Foundation event took place at the Reiner-Burchill residence (Silvertop) on October 29, 2000. The event featured a panel discussion of many of the persons involved in the construction of this remarkable residence, hosted by Frank Escher, editor of *John Lautner, Architect*.

The panel was followed by an elegant reception that spread out through the living room, around the pool, and out through the curved sliding glass to the front terrace.

Approximately 130 persons attended, including the Foundation Board

*(Continued on page 8)*

## On engineering Lautner buildings a letter from Andrew Nasser, structural engineer

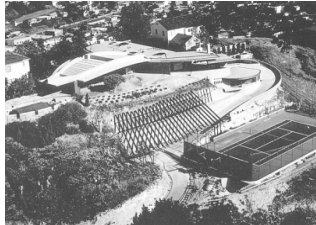
I enjoyed being a member of the panel at the Silvertop event. I was impressed by the large attendance, quality of questions, and variety of people who came up and talked to me at the end of the formal event. It is clear that this type of event enhances the John Lautner legacy. This Legacy seems to have strengthened since the publication of the books.

As you may know, I was not the structural engineer on Silvertop. I was, however aware of the interesting ongoing project while a graduate student at Caltech. Later, in the early sixties, I designed several prestressed concrete structures, and not surprisingly, T Y Lin, who did engineer the Prestress at Silvertop, served as a backup consultant in two special cases. His enthusiasm was a memorable quality.

At the Silvertop event I also heard mention of Hector Mecca who served as concrete superintendent as an aid to Wally. This too brought back memories of Hector who had supervised a few of my projects before I met John Lautner in the early seventies. Wally Niewadomski of course was John's trusty builder of several of the more notable projects, but what I remember most is the diligence I saw him exercise throughout the remarkable Pacific house project, which I did engineer. In fact I did engineer most of John's projects since the middle seventies. It was a happy association, but the type which reminds us of the fleeting passage of time. Of special interest at the Silvertop discussion was the presence of both the original owner, Mr Reiner, and the longtime owners: Dr and Mrs. Burchill. This was a rare conjunction of unusual people whose actions have been essential to the well being of this house. ▽



Part of Silvertop panel: Frank Escher, Philip Burchill, Guy Zebert, Andrew Nasser



Silvertop shortly after initial construction; photographer unknown

“a rare conjunction of unusual people. . . “

### Living in a Lautner House

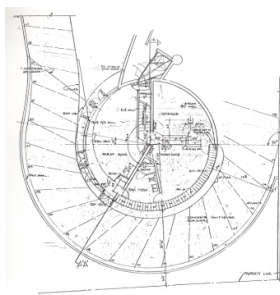
*(Continued from page 3)*

John Lautner Foundation. Your interest in Mr. Lautner's career will help to ensure that his buildings survive the test of time. Good design, as we all know, is timeless; and we are made rich by the opportunity, for however long, to be part of the sculpture that is a John Lautner house. ▽



“...to be part of the sculpture that is a John Lautner house.”

Walstrom house, living area  
Photo by Julius Shulman



Cantilevered driveway at Silvertop

## What's it like to live in a Lautner house?

By Cheryl Barenfeld

This is a question I've asked as a non-owner and have been asked as an owner of a Lautner house. I think all owners will agree with me when I say it is a rare treat indeed. There are some owners who built with Mr. Lautner, a few who remodeled with him, and many who bought existing homes. All that I've had the pleasure of meeting have indicated their appreciation of inhabiting what can only be described as a sculpture for living. Some may think of Mr. Lautner as an architect for the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth. Late in his career, he did, of course, design a number of highly imaginative homes for people with large budgets who wanted unique living conditions. These structures utilized materials and craftsmanship that would permit undulating lines, seamless flow of space, and the integration of exterior and interior that Frank Lloyd Wright, his mentor, referred to as organic architecture. Early in his career, however, he designed some inexpensive homes, includ-



Living in Lautner House...

ing mine, which was designed for a man of modest means who simply wanted good architecture. As owners, we meet once a year, each time at a different residence, to discuss topics of common interest.

One amusing topic that emerged was the apparent success of Mr. Lautner's blending of the indoors and outdoors through the eyes of our fine feathered friends. It seems we all share the problem of hearing loud thunks while sitting in our homes. Flying birds cannot distinguish the house from the landscape, an unintended result of this obviously successful design. Most times, the birds continue on and fly away. Sometimes, however, they are stunned by the collision and fall to the ground, only to recover at a later time.

Perhaps the birds are not so fond of Mr. Lautner's architecture and would prefer that we live in some of the large and undistinguished (other than by size, that is) mansions that seem to be popping up in our neighborhoods lately.

Through the John Lautner Foundation, you, the public, are being afforded the unique opportunity to visit a new property each year (do not be alarmed by any loud thunks), visit with the owners of that as well as other properties, and experience the spaces as they were meant to be experienced.

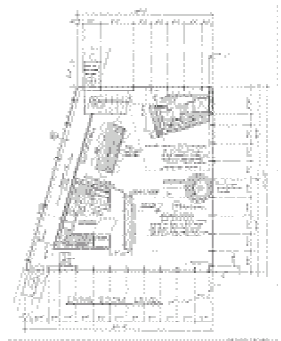
On so many tours where we are privileged to experience John Lautner's architecture, we do so only as observers rather than participants. At the Foundation's events, we are given more time to spend in the space and are not restricted in the way tours usually dictate. A house is not meant to be observed. When one is allowed to sit down and experience the surroundings as a participant, one becomes part of those surroundings. It is then that the question, what's it like to live in a John Lautner house, can be answered. And it can, in a sense, be answered by you. A guest in the house is the next best thing to living there. Welcome to the

*(Continued on page 2)*

*"Some may think of Mr. Lautner as an architect for the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth."*



Interior of Concannon residence



Floor plan of main living area of Walstrom residence. plan from archives



The Turner residence in Colorado is threatened with demolition, much like the Harvey house, if the right person does not snap it up. Check <http://www.johnlautner.org/transition.html> or call the Foundation for info.

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*"Until John came, my father's clients received a fine bunch of eclectic solutions to their needs."*

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At 7 years old, Henry's Restaruant in Pomona, CA was the first Lautner structure I ever experienced; I wasn't sure if I liked it at first, but I never forgot it. Now, 40 years later, after studying Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright I think I finally "get it." Lautner was great "American" architect.  
Peter Boulé <[pjboule@aol.com](mailto:pjboule@aol.com)>  
Vancouver, WA USA - Saturday,  
August 18, 2001 at 18:31:03 (PDT)  
from online guestbook

## THE HIGH IMPACT ARRIVAL & INFLUENCE OF THE REAL THING

*By Elizabeth Honnold-Harris*

As noted in the various biographical sketches about John, he was for a time associated with my father, Douglas Honnold, in a modest two-architect office on Grace Avenue in Hollywood. Daddy's office was in a small studio building about 100 yards from our house, so small a building that the secretary had her desk, phone buzzer and L.C. Smith typewriter in a little room in the main house. Between the studio and the house there was a graveled walkway past a big date palm circled by a brick ring broad enough for me to scamper on or for adults to sit on for lunch and conversation. There was a draftsmen's bathroom attached to the main house with its own outside door. It had a huge and overflowing wastebasket full of paper towels bearing the smudges and smears of soft pencils and charcoal sticks. Once upon a time, boys & girls, a draftsman lived in a cloud of graphite, charcoal and rubber-crums from those fat gum erasers. Remember those?



Lautner flanked by early friends Jim Charlton and Bob Mosher

So one day,  
John Lautner joined up. . .

Until John came, my father's clients received a fine bunch of eclectic solutions to their needs. No new ground was broken, no surprises came, and the sedate rich of the movie colony could expect fine Georgian and Beaux Arts details and elegant moldings and finials and sweeping staircases.

Daddy was finicky and exact and met their needs and always came in on or under budget. He had pet contractors who knew what was what and gave the client good construction because, as clerk of the works, Daddy was a pistolero when it came to details.

So one day, John Lautner joined up. All we knew about him at first was that he had come from Frank Lloyd Wright, identified only as a faraway

**I had never seen a grownup man wearing a bright turquoise shirt with a plaid wool tie before.**

mystic eminence whose stuff was out there somewhere being admired. Daddy said that everything Mister Wright had built tended to leak and fall apart, so he hoped that John wouldn't mind being careful about stuff like that. Little did we know!

My first encounter with John was at his first lunch hour with the draftsmen seated on the brick ring around the date palm. I had never seen a grownup man wearing a bright turquoise shirt with a plaid wool tie before. I had never seen a man wearing a 2-pound turquoise and silver ring.


I had never heard an ARCHITECT laugh so loudly that all my mother's cats fluffed up their tails and shinned up the eucalyptus trees. And certainly none of the draftsmen had ever heard Serious Architecture and Principles of Beauty &



*(Continued from page 4) High impact*

Excellence talked about over their noon-time sandwiches. They hung on John's every word with their jaws ajar and their eyes very round indeed. Daddy, in his dark gray flannel slacks, white Brooks Bros. shirt & regimental striped tie, stood at one side with a very serious expression on his face. He was seeing the future and, with his keen eclectic sense of what works in everyday life, he wondered if he was really ready for it all.

And as the weeks and months rolled by, Daddy found that turning John loose was the way to go, but for heaven's sake keep him away from the clients...

those brilliantly colored shirts, that giant Irish guffaw, those massive hands that carved their jobs out of thin air...a risky flight indeed. And building by building, up one side of Rodeo drive and down Doheny and around the corner on Sunset, the magical Lautner touch came to pass. and when the most maidenly priss of a draftsman turned up at work one morning in a bright yellow shirt, Daddy wasn't the only one who had seen the future. John had brought it with him to Grace Avenue, and the rest (as they say) is Architectural History. 

Thanks for everything. I had a great time visiting. The houses we visited looked beyond architecture. John Lautner was a genius indeed. I now start reading the book instead of looking at the beautiful pictures Hope all goes well.

greetings

Menno Lam

<[lam.lam@worldonline.nl](mailto:lam.lam@worldonline.nl)>

Slidrecht, The Netherlands -

Wednesday, July 04, 2001 at

14:47:38 (PDT)

from online guestbook

*(Continued from page 6) Restoration*


and began my work. John de la Veaux provided valuable advice and information as he remembered every detail of the almost 50-year-old construction, even the names of the various tradesmen and suppliers of building materials.

We began with a large demolition job, removing almost everything that was not included in the original design. I called George Rusher, the original mechanical contractor, who had installed the hydronic radiant heating system in the floor slabs, but after a number of tests, we determined that the system had been broken up due to added structures and it was too costly to bring it back to a working condition. I designed a substitute roof mounted heating and air conditioning system and reshaped the roof so it would be not visible from the below. This involved detailed layout of ductwork, equipment and diffusers, which look like small holes in the ceiling.

The roof framing and fascias were sagging. They looked awful. Robin had to reframe and repair much of the framing and roof overhangs. The whole roofing, gutters and fascias had to be redone. They are perfectly straight now, with all new copper work, which looks beautiful. The circular roof edges, which have a complex double curved shape, were not finished in copper originally and I am pleased that Robin convinced the owners to do this extra work as it greatly enhances the looks of the house.

The glass and mirrors of the master bath had to be redesigned, sliding glass doors throughout had to be repaired and restored, light fixtures located and selected or restored, new stone work done in areas that had been affected by previous additions, new finish woodwork done, cabinet work, aluminum frames restored, marble and terrazzo cleaned up and brought to a new life, plumbing fittings, and the list could go on and on. Kelly Lynch got involved in the work in her determination to restore everything to the best it was in the early Fifties. The ingenuity in the original design and the quality of the work was outstanding.

The work took much longer to be completed than anybody expected, as it was not possible to know the condition of the materials behind the finish materials that were being removed. More extensive repairs were needed in most cases. Robin and his craftsmen deserve much credit for the quality of their work and Kelly and Mitch for their faith, courage, endurance and the incredible amount of time they contributed themselves.

The kitchen-carport wing still remains to be restored. It presents such a contrast to the completed work that I hope that Kelly and Mitch will find the energy to continue. 

...those brilliantly colored shirts, that giant Irish guffaw, those massive hands..."



Do you buy books online? Next time, consider starting at the JLF website, clicking on "books", and making your purchase through the link to Amazon.com. Anything you buy on that trip will benefit the foundation, whether it's books on architecture or toys for your grandchild.

## RESTORATION OF HARVEY RESIDENCE

By Helena Arahuete, Architect

*“The house  
looked like an  
abandoned con-  
struction site.”*

Crosby Doe, of Mossler, Deasy & Doe, Real Estate Services, called in March of 1998 and told me that the Harvey Residence was for sale. His friends Kelly Lynch, the actress, and Mitch Glazer, the screenwriter, were interested in buying and restoring it. Crosby Doe proposed a meeting at the house the following day.

I had never seen the house before. John Lautner had designed it in 1949 for Leo Harvey, of Harvey Aluminum. I had asked Mr. Lautner about the Harvey House many years ago. Usually, he enjoyed talking about his earlier projects, as each one had been a unique challenge, and it was very inspiring for me to listen to him. Mr. Lautner would never say anything negative about his clients and he took a lot of pride in his buildings. However, he did not want to talk about this one, so I gathered that it had not been a happy experience.

The property is a leveled hilltop in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles, with beautiful distant views. The house looked like an abandoned construction site. There were unfinished nondescript additions built around parts of the house, blocking the views; roof mounted ductwork for heating and air conditioning had been added and later torn out, leaving large openings in the roof where rain would pour right through. Roofs and fascias were patched up and sagging, the large kitchen window and breakfast nook were covered with stone work, so the kitchen had neither natural light nor fresh air.

Additional construction was blocking part of the panoramic view from the living-dining area and a large circular terrace with an open trellis at the entrance to the house had been roofed and enclosed with glass. This area in the past had provided a beautiful transition between the outside and inside space of the house. We were all in a state of shock when we saw it. I give Kelly Lynch and Mitch Glazer a lot of credit for their courage and determination, as they made an offer on the house and decided to restore it. They had substantial offers from others but

*Helena was Lautner's chief architect for over 20 years, until the time of his death. She is licensed in Argentina, California, Idaho, and Michigan.*

they turned them down. Kelly and Mitch love good architecture and had earlier restored a cabin designed by Richard Neutra.

I was engaged to do the architectural work. Crosby Doe's recommendations and my past record as the Chief Architect in John Lautner's office for over 20 years contributed to my new Clients' decision.

John de la Veaux, who had built some of the best of John Lautner's designs, had done the original construction. I asked my clients to engage him as a consultant and his contribution was invaluable. I recommended the builder, Robin Poirier, who had been trained by John de la Veaux, years earlier, to do the construction work. Robin had done some outstanding work on his own for Mr. Lautner and he has a huge admiration for "The Chief's" (as he calls him) architecture. He would do nothing less than his absolute best quality work, as he is a perfectionist.

The building has a central circular area containing the entry, terrace, study, living and dining areas, and two long rectangular wings: the bedrooms wing to the South and the kitchen, carport, mechanical and greenhouse wing to the North. The owners decided to do the work in phases, beginning with the bedrooms and the study, so they could move in and continue with the remaining restoration at a later date.

I met with Frank Escher, the Administrator of the Lautner Archive, borrowed the original drawings and photos of the residence

*(Continued on page 5)*



*Ask Helena about the ceiling...and the satellite lights.*

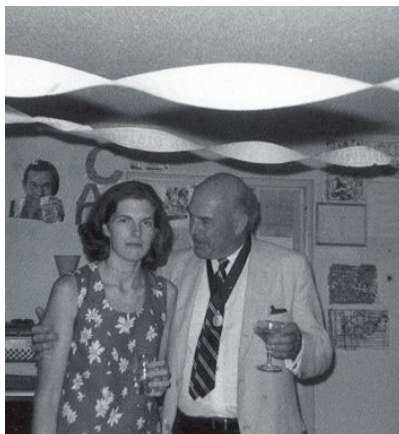
## YOU GUYS DON'T KNOW WHAT A REAL BIRTHDAY PARTY LOOKS LIKE

*Elizabeth Honnold-Harris, step-daughter and unrepentant observer of John Lautner, tells it like it was.*

The scholarly, ruminative and serious celebration of John Lautner's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday in one of his great houses of the 1950s is a lovely tribute indeed, but there's some stuff you ought to know. The celebration of today is fitting and proper for a grand old fellow that most of you knew only by that definition. I'd like to take you back to an earlier birthday party for a younger eminence before it all became so...so, well, eminent. Once upon a time, we had a bunch of crazy fun on John's birthday.

Emulating Mister Wright, who apparently declared a national holiday on his birthday, John wanted as close to the Real Thing as he could get. Descriptions of Mister Wright's birthday doings were lovingly provided, and although we knew we couldn't afford the Budapest String Quartet or 5 new Persian rugs, we were determined to provide at least the zeitgeist of a fine birthday festival. The guest list was the easiest part...it was the same people who wandered in and out of our house on regular weekend bean-feeds and happy drunks

evenings. The food wasn't a problem because Elizabeth Senior was a brilliant cook and fearless about feeding a multitude. It was the Party Ambience that John worried about. Wandering accordion? Naaahh...too New Jersey. Hired piano player? Naaahh...too Beverly Hills. The music was spun by hand, on and off the turntables with every 78 and 33-1/3 and 45 in the house...stacks of LOUD music, played at concert pitch plus, pouring out the opened dining room windows above the garden. Decorations? Jugs full of whatever was in bloom, and tree and bush branches torn off and plugged into containers. Hors d'oeuvres with cocktails? Naahhh...just stick out a bunch of cheese with some knives and crackers. Cocktails? Well, one year here's how it went...



Another daughter, another birthday: Lautner with daughter Judy, July 1970

Now John loved fancy drinks once in a while. He was basically a Jim Beam consumer for everyday wear, but for special occasions more was really needed.

How about Daiquiris? How about not having to make them One At a Time? How about a nice clean washtub and a block of ice and a case of rum? How 'BOUT that! Of course, making a washtub full of Daiquiris was not for amateur bartenders to get right the first time...a certain amount of tasting as we assembled it was required, and (trust me, children) by the time the earliest birdguest flew in for the fray, a certain amount of toastedness could be noted among the wait-staff. Ahh but the rewarding moments of glee as each guest was escorted to the tub, handed a glass and invited to dip! Ahh the return trips to the tub! Ahh the replenishment of the tub...and on and on into the night with no more tasting ("Just pour the rum right on the ice-block, there's enough other stuff in there") and few decisions to make as to proportions. Yes we eventually ate dinner...but the double-chocolate birthday cake sat there overnight untouched in its splendor, with only a few tiny munches from mother's kittens who apparently didn't like bittersweet frosting at all. It should also be noted that, in addition to the untouched birthday cake found the next morning, we also found a guest asleep under the guava tree. And in his party shirt, too.

So as you celebrate with fitting appreciation and admiration for our great John Lautner, please remember how many wonderful adventures it took for the Real Thing to get here today.

Truely inspierring architect for (Belgian) architecture students. organic rules!

stijn gilbert

<[stijn Gilbert@advalvas.be](mailto:stijn Gilbert@advalvas.be)>

Zulte, Belgium -

Saturday, June 02, 2001 at

06:25:58 (PDT)

from online guestbook

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*"Of course, making a washtub full of Daiquiris was not for amateur bartenders to get right the first time..."*

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## The John Lautner Foundation

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### About this newsletter:

Editor: Judy Lautner  
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Published at least once per year  
What did you like about it? What didn't you like? What would you like to see added? Left out? Write to me at the above email address or:  
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(Continued from page 1) Silvertop event of Directors, several Lautner building owners, and other Lautner fans.

Taking part in the panel discussion were Ken Reiner, original client, Dr. Burchill, present owner, Guy Zebert, architectural supervisor of construction, John Warner, concrete contractor, Andrew Nasser, structural engineer (not of Silvertop but of several other Lautner projects), and Helena Arahuete, Lautner associate at time of Silvertop remodel. Because of Escher's astute questions and direction, a fascinating history was revealed that afternoon.

Among the highlights of the discussion: the initial design concept; the development of the pre-stressed concrete roof and cantilevered driveway; The hanging glass (or is it??) in the living room; the tunnels; Reiner's inventions throughout; how Silvertop helped save Watts Towers.

The discussion was videotaped. Copies of the final edited tape, including photographs and plans where helpful to illustrate the conversation, will be available for purchase at a later date.



The John Lautner  
Foundation  
P.O. Box 29517

## Who is the John Lautner Foundation?

The Foundation is a registered non-profit organization (meaning your donations are tax-deductible, among other things), headed by a volunteer board of directors. The present board includes:

*Karol Lautner Peterson*, President

Daughter of Lautner

*Christopher Carr*, Vice-President

Past board member and director of the Taliesin Fellow Archives

*Frank Escher*, Administrator of the Foundation Archives

Architect, Editor of John Lautner, Architect

*Judith Lautner*, Web site manager

Daughter of Lautner

*Duncan Nicholson*, Secretary

Architect and former Lautner associate

### Advisors to the board:

Cheryl Barenfeld  
Will Bruder  
Barbara-Ann Campbell-Lange  
Bette Cohen  
Crosby Doe  
Lord Norman Foster  
Ann Friedberg  
Mitch Glazer  
James Goldstein  
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James Morris  
Oscar Rodolfo Munoz  
June Perez  
Tina Peterson  
Joseph Rosa  
Julia Silliman  
Julia Strickland  
Louis Wiehle  
Eric Lloyd Wright

As of early October, the Foundation had 159 members (including "partner" memberships) and several new volunteers. You will hear more about board members, advisors, volunteers, and members in future issues.