

## *North Westdale Neighborhood Association*

*P.O. Box 642522, Los Angeles, CA 90064*

*www.northwestdale.com - groups.yahoo.com/group/NWNA*

### **RALPH PRIMO, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE NWNA, TALKS ABOUT OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.**

*By Joan Winters—NWNA Secretary*

Ralph and Celia moved into their house on Butler Avenue in 1960 where they raised their three children. "Longevity" comes to mind with these two lovely people. Not only have they lived here in North Westdale for 55 years, they have been married for 63 years, and are the proud owners of Primo's Donuts in our community, with its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up next year. Ralph Primo was the first president of the North Westdale Neighborhood Association from 1981 to 1983. It started as a neighborhood watch that Ralph organized due to a crime spike in the community. Just one month in 1980, six homes were broken into on Ralph's block alone.



**Celia and Ralph Primo**

*Photo by Martin Rubin*

Other streets in the neighborhood were also experiencing crime, and one neighbor was abducted and raped. At the time there was only one police car covering a wide area. Ralph said some fathers were patrolling some streets with baseball bats, but he was happy when they switched to flashlights! Crime-watch meetings were held in Richland School Auditorium and were well-attended by the community and crime went down. Ralph and his wife Celia attribute the crime spike to development in the area, including Hughes supermarket and the 405 freeway (where a quick escape could be made).

Recently I met with Celia and Ralph Primo and their son Ralph Jr. in their acclaimed donut shop on Sawtelle Blvd. The conversation was a history lesson of this community from their perspective. They continue to operate the shop, which has had three generations of Primos involved. They have described it as one of the few mom-and-pop businesses around here now, and the business is still booming. Wearing a crisp white apron, Ralph, who has just turned 85, said, "This place is our little gold mine. It has helped send our three kids to college and it's helped our businesses." They recall how in the 1950s through the 1970s there were other mom-and-pop businesses here in North Westdale. A few of you might remember some, such as Ward's Hardware and K's (Klein's) Delicatessen, both on National. The Primos also owned a successful Mexican restaurant for five years, Casa Primo, which was tucked away on the back lot of the Union 76 gas station near their donut shop. However, Union Oil would not renew their lease. Ralph said, "Union Oil had other plans."

They recalled the celery fields where Ralph's (supermarket) is now, and the corn fields from Sawtelle to Sepulveda, before the 405 freeway was there. Their son, Ralph, Jr., describes life in North Westdale when he was a child, as having a "Mayberry-feel; a small-town feel" to it. Their windows could be left open. He and his friends would pitch tents in their front yard and camp out all night, and the neighborhood children would congregate at the Primo's house. Ralph said they were the first Mexican family in their neighborhood, and that this neighborhood was a melting pot of races. Their son said he had friends of all races and they had a great time playing and riding their bikes. Activities revolved around Mar Vista Park where Ralph Sr. coached Little League. He was also the scoutmaster for the Westdale Scout Troop. Celia also had many interests besides working in their businesses. She was involved in the PTA and she worked as an interpreter at UCLA, among other activities.

An interesting fact: in the early 1960s, the Primo's joined in with four neighborhood families in a successful lawsuit against the City of Santa Monica because of the airport. It was later overturned. When asked about other changes in our neighborhood, Ralph said he really misses a large local student enrollment at Richland and Daniel Webster Middle School. He also finds, like many of us, the speeding, cut-through traffic and drivers going through stop signs in our neighborhood to be an irritant.

Ralph has been an active businessman, at one time in real estate investment properties, a restaurateur, and a stock broker. He and Celia are proud of their successful children and their life in this community.

The Primos describe their life here as establishing the American Dream.





## President's Report by NWNA President Martin Rubin

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### Hi Neighbors,

It is encouraging to see new faces popping up and being interested at our meetings, but more neighbors should attend our general meetings at Saint Andrew's. A lot of work goes into arranging having special speakers. Our two speakers at the October meeting supplied valuable information and answered our questions. Our first speaker, So Cal Gas Public Affairs Manager Mike Harriel, gave a very informative talk about the new advanced gas meters being installed. He spoke about the differences between meters located at the curb and those located by the home, and answered many questions. At 7:45 PM, our approximately 15 neighbors who attended were then treated to an excellent informational lecture by Paula Henson of Terra Bella Water on water usage and the current drought situation. She covered important things we should be aware of as we change from grass lawns to other landscape options. To prevent trees from dying, it is important to keep watering them at the canopy drip line. Everyone who changed or plans to replace their grass lawns would certainly have benefited by hearing Paula speak. I plan to take advantage of her offer to speak about soil at a future meeting. Thank you to both speakers. The meeting ended about 8:30 PM.

I am hopeful that we will see some relief in the not too distant future from Santa Monica Airport 's negative impacts. For a fourth time, the FAA has delayed giving their opinion about legal issues regarding the City of Santa Monica's rights. Santa Monica is considering their options. Several residents from North Westdale attended the October 27<sup>th</sup> SM City Council meeting to speak and hear the Council deliberate on a first-ever agenda item focused solely on airport emissions. I, your VP Virginia Ernst and the others all stayed past 1:00 AM. Our own singer-songwriter Carolyn Goldman used her two minutes of comment time to sing part of "Ode to Breathing", the song she wrote about the airport. She sang the full version at our Fall Block Party.

The Treasurer's report for last year is posted on the NWNA website.

I wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving, and as always I encourage everyone to get involved.

*Annual Dues Time*



or



**Thank you to all who have already contributed!**

Please help our neighborhood association by making out a \$15 (or more) check payable to "NWNA"; mail to: NWNA, P.O. Box 642522, L.A., CA 90064. You can also use the PAYPAL button on our website, [www.northwestdale.com](http://www.northwestdale.com). NWNA expenses include printing our monthly newsletters, rental of our meeting hall and special-meeting refreshments, website hosting, post office box rental, events like our Fall Block Party, and other expenses.

Whether you own or rent, please invest in our neighborhood. Thank you in advance.

The North Westdale Neighborhood Association  
Is in Zone 2 of the  
Mar Vista Community Council.

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