

HUNTINGTON BEACH—A little girl shrieked happily as she rode her tricycle down a new, freshly paved sidewalk. At the end of the street, other children played in a sparkling clean, verdant new park.

Laughter matched the sunny weather, which bathed the freshly painted stucco apartment buildings in warm earth tones. Recently planted flowers bloomed in sidewalk planters; new amberleaf trees showed buds soon to become springtime leaves.

The scene Tuesday afternoon could have been any well-kept, middle-class street in Orange County. But the name on the street sign said "Commodore Circle," and for years in Huntington Beach, that name was synonymous with "slum."

sidewalks and a small public outdoor area that mainly consisted of debris and a swimming pool full of stagnant water. Yards had no grass, but much junk. Rats and cockroaches infested the living quarters.

"Commodore Circle was the worst block in this entire city," Mayor Thomas J. Mays said in an interview Tuesday. "It had the worst crime rate. Everything was going on there, including drug dealing. But the changes that have taken place have now made this a real great neighborhood. I think it's definitely a success story."

The changes were generated by a five-year, \$1.2-million rehabilitation project. The last improvement to the cul-de-sac was completion last week of the park at the end of Commodore Circle, former site of the unusable swimming pool.

Please see **STREET, B12**

by TED JOHNSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SANTA ANA—A group of parents seeking to stop the closing of Fountain Valley Elementary School has filed suit against the school district, alleging that its Board of Trustees voted to close the school without a proper environmental impact study.

The Future Education Protection Committee, a group of about 40 parents from the district opposed to the closing, seeks a permanent injunction to halt the closing of the school at 17911 Bushard St. They argue that the board's decision was made without proper consideration of the safety of the pupils and the impact it would have on other schools.

District officials "didn't listen to anything and anybody," said Candace Doyle, the committee's treasurer, who has two children at the school.

The suit was filed here Monday in Orange County Superior Court, and a hearing has yet to be scheduled.

Please see **CLOSING, B7**

A Singer of the County's Praises Is Waiting for a Call

It's late Friday evening and the phone is ringing, again. "I think God meant for us to meet," Arnnie Stevens says through the receiver. "I didn't think I'd get you."

This guy's got a perky voice, I'm thinking. A little *too* perky.

Then he says he's 62 years old but he feels 40 years younger. He says he's been gone all day, just got home and read my column about the paltry pickings for a song about Orange County. He says he's going to make us both feel a lot better.

"Can I have 2½ minutes, just 2½ minutes of your time?" he asks me.

I tell Arnnie to go ahead. Then without missing a beat, he bursts into song.

Welcome one and all



DIANNE KLEIN

*Glad you came to call
Orange County is one place you can't miss
Lots of things to do
Entertainment, too
Work and play with love, blue skies,*

stars above

Fountain Valley, Costa Mesa

Take your choice to live

Newport Beach or Santa Ana, Orange,

Fullerton

Disneyland's a ball

Angels, Rams and all

Sailing seas of blue, Orange County's for

you.

Then Arnnie's voice starts percolating in imitation of the missing orchestra:

Bump, bump, bump, bump, bummmmp.

La-da-da-da-dummm. Bump, bump,

bump, bump, bummmmp.

La-da-da-da-dummm.

Then the chorus:

Fountain Valley, Costa Mesa, Take your

choice to live. . .

And the closing tag: *Orange County,*

Orange County, Orange County's for you.

I'm speechless, but I'm smiling.

Arnnie's melody isn't easy to forget.

"So whataya think?" he says. "It's catchy, isn't it? That other song you wrote about, nobody's gonna remember those lyrics. These, you remember."

So we talk a little more. Arnnie the singer and songwriter laments the state of the music industry today. He says he was watching the Grammy Awards the other night and he couldn't believe it. He felt like he was from another planet. Who are these people, he wants to know. *That's music?*

Then he gives me a few fascinating insights about his personal life—"I went to high school with Herb Alpert's older

Please see **KLEIN, B12**

ORANGE COUNTY
(REF PAM FEE)

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ORANGE COUNTY

KLEIN: Singer of Praises Waits for a Call

Continued from B1

brother. I wish it had been Herb but whataya gonna do?"—and says he thinks it would be worth my while to meet him in person.

I figure maybe Arnnie's right, so the other morning I pay him a visit at his home in Huntington Beach. I'm early, but Arnnie's timing is just right.

"Do I look 62, huh?" he says. "Do I look good? George Burns asks me how I do it."

Arnnie's casually color coordinated in beige and cream—slacks, shirt and patterned pullover—with a big gold and diamond ring that sets off his ensemble rather nicely. His hair, auburn with gray roots, is swept into a modified pompadour.

Arnnie has set out bran muffins and Fig Newtons. He proffers coffee. Within easy reach are his publicity photos "taken some time ago." There's one where he's crooning into a microphone next to a woman wearing a white dress with a circle cutout just above her navel. In the photo, Arnnie's a dead ringer for Wayne Newton minus about 30 pounds.

Arnnie says that these days he has more time to devote to songwriting because he's recently retired from almost 34 years as a recreation director for the city of Los Angeles, teaching kids the fundamentals of sports.

So I ask him why he was inspired to apply his considerable songwriting talents to Orange County, his home of only a few months.

"Well, I went to Hawaii and wrote 'Paradise in Hawaii.' I went to Carmel and I wrote 'Carmel-by-the-Sea.' . . . Then out here, I'm saying, 'What a wide-open area and there is so much out here!' Disneyland, the Performing Arts Center, South Coast Plaza, Fashion Island. I'm saying, 'a lot of people probably don't know that.' I thought this would put Orange County on the map, musically speaking."

But Arnnie concedes he's still got a ways to go. He's waiting to hear back from the mayors of Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach. He's hoping to perform his song in front of the city councils. He says two local high school band leaders have asked him for sheet music to "Orange County," as well as his "Los Angeles," a big band arrangement recorded by singer Bill Victor.

Last weekend, he says, while aboard a local harbor cruise ship he sang "Orange County" for the other passengers, and one of them, a real estate broker, was so impressed that she asked for a tape to play for her clients and friends.

The big break, however, still eludes Arnnie. Arsenio Hall and Pat Sajak—"I met him once in a deli in Woodland Hills; he would remember me"—haven't gotten back to him.

"In addition to me, is a springboard to keep going on," Arnnie says, "I don't mind it. . . . Some-

thing is going to make it happen. Call it God's miracle, a dream in my mind. But I think when people hear my music, they won't be able to resist. I think it's time to come back to sanity, to good music. There's a place for this Absolutely. . . .

"When I think of all the mediocre talent making millions, I think there is something very wrong. They go on stage, bare-chested, and scream. That's talent? Get on stage, wear a suit! Get dressed! Look human!"

Then Arnnie sings me a few more of his songs, with feeling.

"It just makes you feel that it's great to be alive, doesn't it?" he says. "Give a person a downbeat, a few notes and it just makes them feel a little better, I think."

It's time to take my leave. Arnnie walks me out to my car. He's all smiles, with a bounce in his step.

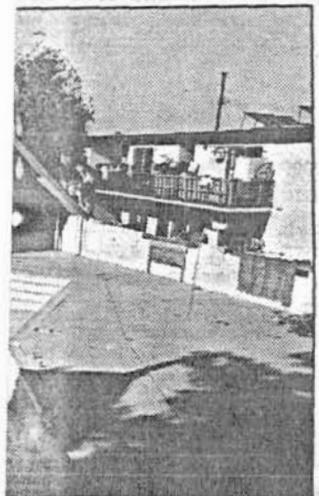
"This has been quite a day, hasn't it?" he says.

It's 11 a.m., but I'm thinking Arnnie is right.

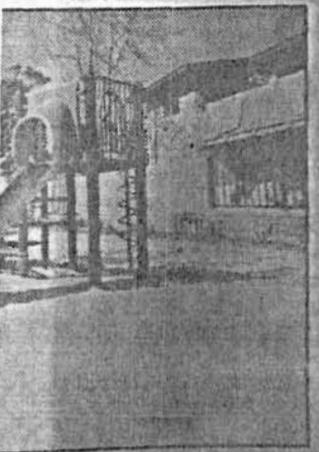
Bump, bump, bump, bump, bummmmp. La-da-da-da-dummm

I can't get "Orange County" out of my mind.

Dianne Klein's column appears Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Readers may reach Klein by writing to her at The Times Orange County Edition, 1375 Sunflower Ave., Costa Mesa, Calif. 92626, or calling (714) 966-7406.



GAIL FISHER / Los Angeles Times
Amadore Circle, above, in
with play equipment, below.



two-bedroom unit to \$800 for
ree-bedroom unit." Spencer
"But a family in many cases
not pay that amount but only
of their income. So in some
a family may be paying only
or so a month for one of these

interiors of the apartment
plexes are now as tidy as the
des, city officials said. By
past, only three years ago some
had kitchens and bathrooms
did not function. "Some stairs
upstairs bathrooms where the
ts were stopped up and the
ents were throwing loads of
sewage out the windows,"
scer said.
it no longer
low this is a cheap
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Terri Salkin, a
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THE VINTAGE COLLECTION



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