Thank you to each of you for joining us today.

Congratulations and thank you to each and all of our Honorees and their Presenters.

A special bow to Stacey and her wise counsel over the years – as in “You don’t want to do that!”

To Clark for expertly following Jim Hughes’ ‘Run of the Show’ for 16 years.

And, Darlene, you are a hit!

When you all were nice enough to honor Homer and me 19 years ago, we quoted Lew Scarr, a popular columnist who, 50 years ago, wrote, “A Park is unlike any other asset in the city. It is not a building nor a production line, nor a warm breeze. A Park is a living, growing thing that will die if the will of the people dies, or it will flourish as much as they want it to.”

Someone recently asked me where we would be without Balboa Park. We’ve recounted in the past, its value as a place for solace – where we came together to ask, “Why?” after 9/11, for help after the devastating fires, a place to join others who share in the intensity of our feelings or a place to quietly reflect and recreate and when appropriate, to learn or be entertained – from the Air & Space Museum to the Zoo – and, of course, the theaters.

But, our Park has needs – and challenges. We have shelves of dust collecting ‘studies’. We have a Master Plan and a Precise Plan but lack the resources to implement them.

We need the ‘Will of the People’ to change the status quo. “If you see something, say something.” If you see a need – and are willing to provide some funding – or not – call us.

Many of our donors have – from fencing in dog park, restoring the Lily Pond, LED lighting, the Carousel, we are here to help the process.

Which leads me to Projects vs. Process. We know there are constraints, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Supervision is necessary. But when building 28” elevated viewing platform around the Moreton Bay Fig Tree requires approval from the FAA because it’s in the flight path – Well, you be the judge.

However, delays drive up the costs and generate donor disenchantment.
We have not resolved our parking problems or met the $300 million unfunded infrastructure needs.

There is painful progress. Painful because our Park and our patterns will be disrupted in the near future, but Progress, because the California Tower is being seismically retrofitted, a new water line will cause trenching through the ‘heart of the park’, the Mingei Museum and International Cottages are under construction and the Palisades will be re-landsced and the buildings enhanced. And Progress because these are funded positive changes. As the saying goes, you can’t make an omelet without breaking some eggs.

But what then? We are on the cusp of a ‘New Beginning’. This is where you come in. ‘The Will of the People!’

There will be changes: More Public/Private Partnerships. It is only natural – no pun intended – that the Natural History Museum – with botanical expertise and more than 700 volunteers, should have a role in native plant landscaping to be used as a teaching tool, and the Timken Museum will take on added responsibility for their surroundings while relieving Park and Rec staff.

There will be changes in governance – with a new Mayor, a new District 3 Representative and a new Park & Recreation Director.

You will influence the future of the Park because you will vote. All County Supervisors and all City Council Members must shoulder mutual responsibility for this tremendous regional asset.

We, the Friends, are inviting candidates to share their views – on a dedicated income stream for Balboa Park – there is none. Of the $3B City budget, our allotment is miniscule. The hard working Park & Recreation Department is chronically underfunded and understaffed. Park governance needs to be addressed and perhaps, most importantly, streamlining the “Process”.

So now, I challenge you, good friends, to exercise ‘The Will of the People’ and insure this is the Park that Lew Scarr envisioned – and which we all deserve.

Go forth and multiply – and have a wonderful day in our Park.

Thank you.

Betty Peabody