

Getting our ACT (Altadena Crest Trail) Together: Restoring historic Altadena trails for the enjoyment of all!

By Robert Staehle & Lori Paul

About the authors: Robert Staehle and Lori Paul have lived in Altadena since 1994 and began enjoying Altadena trails long before that. Robert Chairs the Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group. Lori is a California native, wildlife biologist, and former zookeeper. Both are retired from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Among Altadena's most valued treasures are the beautiful wild lands around and within our community, nestled as we are on the edge the San Gabriel Mountain foothills and canyons. How can you get out to enjoy these amazing natural places up close? Trails are one of the best ways. As "linear parks," trails provide free, pastoral recreation for hikers, runners, dog-walkers, bicyclists, and equestrians; for birdwatchers, artists, photographers, and amateur astronomers. Trails are terrific for anyone interested in healthful walking. Our local trails also offer beautiful vistas: of mountains, cities, sunsets, and even the Pacific Ocean, including Catalina Island on clear days.

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Traversing foothill ridges and ravines near and within neighborhoods on the edge of the Angeles National Forest is the Altadena Crest Trail (ACT) that currently exists in segments totaling approximately 13 crooked miles from Hahamongna Watershed Park in the upper Arroyo Seco (next to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory JPL) on the west... to Eaton Canyon Natural Area and the historic Mount Wilson Toll Road on the east. The Altadena Crest Trail serves as an east-west backbone trail that connects other regional trails to one another. The ACT connects northern neighborhoods and public streets to Millard Canyon and its waterfall as well as to trails that can take you to the old Dawn Mine. From the ACT you can connect to the trail that climbs Echo Mountain; or to the Cobb Estate; and to Eaton Canyon Nature Center and the trail to Eaton Canyon Falls. Another trail leads to the grave of Owen Brown, who was a participant in the famous raid on Harpers Ferry. He is a son of John Brown, the abolitionist who many



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believe struck the match that ignited the U. S. Civil War. The ACT and associated trails lead to so many interesting and beautiful places!

On any weekend, you might find hundreds of people using Altadena's trails. On weekdays, some people even commute on segments of the Altadena Crest Trail, such as the route from the west end of Altadena Drive down to JPL's East Gate. Many use our trails to improve their physical health while others focus on relaxation or learning: about wildflowers, wildlife, and geology; or, at night, about owls, bats, and the constellations that can be seen in our comparatively dark foothill skies. Watching a full Moon rise above a dark mountain ridge is a beautiful way to perceive the Earth's swift rotation.

A refreshing view of our natural world can be experienced on almost any short walk on Altadena's trails, which are free and open to anyone on foot, horseback, or non-motorized bicycle. Over 50 species of wildflowers typically bloom along the ACT, mostly in the spring. See rare Ocellated Humboldt Lilies along stream courses; bright orange Sticky Monkey Flowers on chaparral covered slopes; aromatic black sage with its lilac-colored flower stalks; common yellow sunflowers; and, later in the summer, 5-foot-tall stalks of bright red Scarlet Larkspur. Numerous butterflies can be seen alongside trails and near streams, including Monarchs, Western Tiger Swallowtails, Variable Checkerspots, West Coast Ladies, Mourning Cloaks, Red Admirals, and many others. Mammals of all sizes use our local trails as wildlife corridors, often late at night, from small cottontails and uncommon Merriam's chipmunks to large black bears.

Altadena's trails began as footpaths used by the native Tongva people. For them, trails were the essential routes that enabled daily life. Trails



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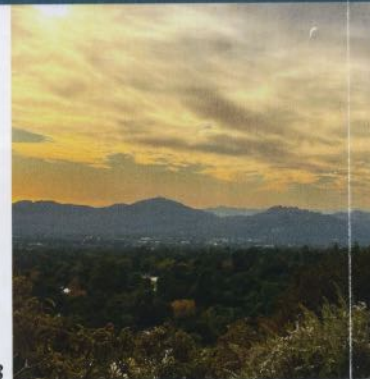
1 Altadena is one of the few communities where a person doesn't need to be wealthy to have a horse. Horses and their riders, shown by 1954 trail marker, still anchor part of Altadena's semi-rural lifestyle. Photo by Heidi Zabriskie. 2 It is a rare treat to spot a bobcat from the trail. Photo by Bonny Schumaker. 3 Hikers along a yet-to-be-restored segment of the ACT in Rubio Canyon. Photo by Lori Paul.

provided access to fresh water; to seasonal villages; to good hunting and fishing sites; and places where useful plants could be harvested, especially oak acorns and the natural grasses, willow, cedar, and other materials needed to make food, shelter, baskets, and tools. From the Altadena Crest Trail, one can even find spots where Tongva artisans once sat under great oak trees drilling holes in small donax, olive, clam, and abalone seashells obtained in trade from coastal peoples in exchange for Tongva goods, such as fine baskets and acorns.

With so much open space once available in California, many historic trails have been taken for granted and subsequently disconnected or lost entirely as subdivisions and urban sprawl accelerated in the 1960s to present. Local trails were built upon indiscriminately, while a few others became paved roads or were lost under flood control dams and other structures.

Altadena's trails are an integral part of our semi-rural, partly equestrian community, and represent our local pioneer history. Responsibility for the gradual loss of continuity and deterioration in the Altadena Crest Trail and its connecting segments lies with Los Angeles County government, whose processes for trail protection and maintenance were inconsistently applied from the 1960s into the 1990s. Two widely-attended public meetings in 2003 called for greater protection of Altadena's trails, especially where the ACT had been severed by construction of the La Viña gated subdivision in 1993 on the pastoral site of the former La Viña Sanatorium. In response, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established a residents' advisory group. The first focus of the new Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group (ACTRWG) was to reconnect the Altadena Crest Trail through the "La Viña Gap." The

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APRIL



group also identified two other major gaps in the original multi-use trail, both named for their general locations: Skylane Gap and the Rubio Canyon Gap, which were to be reconnected as soon as possible, including trail access points. The ACTRWG also works with the County to prioritize and identify funding sources for needed trail improvements and trail amenities. For anyone interested, the ACTRWG is open to all who wish to participate! Trail meetings are at 7:00pm on the second Tuesday of most months at the Altadena Community Center and online via Zoom: www.altadenatrails.org.

A partial map of the Altadena Crest Trail can be found at: <https://trails.lacounty.gov/Trail/11/altadena-crest-trail>

Exactly when the Altadena Crest Trail was formally established as a unit of the County Department of Parks and Recreation is unclear. The ACT as we know it appears to have existed since at least the 1950s. There are older equestrians who have recalled riding the contiguous ACT from the Arroyo Seco to Eaton Canyon into the mid-1970s. The newest re-established portion of the Altadena Crest Trail is now under construction by the California Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) along the east side of the La Viña development. That trail segment lies within public open space land originally promised by the La Viña subdivision plan and was finally transferred to Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy under a 2011 settlement agreement stemming from a citizen lawsuit.

As our community becomes increasingly health-conscious, home values tend to increase when in proximity to public trails, as suggested by a recent Compass real estate ad stating, "Close to numerous hiking trails...this one has it all!" California law protects landowners from liability where public trail easements cross their property. Nearby communities, such as La Canada-Flintridge and Sierra Madre, boast about their public hiking and equestrian trail system. Altadena can share in this pride as we rebuild our own trail network, working toward reconnecting and restoring the entire Altadena Crest Trail, along with its associated trailheads and access points. In one hike we can move through time from native Tongva sites to Civil War abolitionist Owen Brown's gravesite, to expansive views across the modern Los Angeles Basin all the way to the Pacific Ocean, with natural beauty at every turn along the trail.

In State surveys, Altadena is categorized as 80% "park poor" by comparison to other Los Angeles County communities. Altadena's trails constitute "linear parks," the value of which is worth protecting and expanding as a source of free outdoor enrichment and recreation. We encourage you to step out onto a local trail soon to enjoy all the myriad benefits these pathways provide. Happy Trails!

Altadena Neighbors

TUES. APRIL 2

ALTADENA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
@ZOOM

Altadena Chamber of Commerce offers an open session of its board meeting for the public to attend the first Tuesday of every month, excluding legal holidays.

For information email Office@altadenachamber.org

Time: 10am

Cost: Free

SAT. APRIL 6

PASADENA AUDUBON SOCIETY
@Eaton Canyon Nature Center

Bird walks 1st Saturday of the month

Time: 8-10am

Cost: Free

SAT. APRIL 13

MELODIA MARIPOSA

@William Davies Memorial Building

Farnsworth Park

Chamber music series of two String quartets

by Alexander Zemlinsky. And Erich Korngold,

preceded by pre-concert Lecture.

Time: 7pm

Cost: free, must reserve tickets online

TUES. APRIL 16

ALTADENA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

@Altadena Community Center

The Altadena Town Council meets "live" at the

Altadena Community Center the third Tuesday of every month.

Time: 7pm

Cost: Free

THURS. APRIL 25

ALTADENA TOWN COUNCIL #SAFE STREETS
@ZOOM

Citizens and officials discuss making Altadena's

streets safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and car

traffic on the fourth Thursday of every month.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8458458458>

Time: 7pm

Cost: free

MON. APRIL 29

ALTADENA LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

@Altadena Main Library

The Board meets the fourth Monday of the month

to conduct business

Cost: Free

Time: 5pm

FEB. 1 to APRIL 22

ALTADENA HERITAGE STUDENT ART
CONTEST

@aaaim.com/contest.htm

Calling for High School student submissions in

Area Code 91001 for Altadena Heritage Student Art

Contest for Golden Poppy Awards Presentation.

Theme is "Spring Inspirations"

Go to website aaaim.com/contest.htm for info and

to upload digital art.

SAT. AND SUN. JUNE 1-2

ALTA ARTS OPEN STUDIOS

@Various Artists Studios in Altadena and

Pasadena Artists open their studios to the to view

their methods, see environments, and purchase their works. For more information go to <https://altaartscollective.com>.

Time: During the day

Cost: Free to enter

SAT JUNE 6

ALTADENA PRIDE

@Various Locations throughout Central Altadena

5 events throughout the day connected by a

walkabout through town. Opening Ceremony, Flag

Waving on Lake, Spiritual Exploration, Community

Picnic, Festival. For more information go to

altadenapride.org

Time: 10am-6pm

Cost: Free

JUNE 17-JUNE 18

ALTADENA MUSIC THEATRE

@Kids Summer Camp

1985 Locust St., Pasadena

High quality musical theatre training for kids

age 7-12. Camp ends with small camp style

performance of musical "Seussical."

Time: 9am-3pm

Cost: \$350/week

EVERY FRI. EVENING APRIL 5, 12, 19, 26

ALTADENA NEIGHBORHOOD FARMERS
MARKET

@Loma Alta Park, 587 W. Palm St.

Variety of farmers and vendors offering season's

best to handmade crafts and delicious, prepared

foods.

Time: 4-8pm

Cost: free to enter

EVERY WED. PICK-UP APRIL 3, 10, 17, 24

ALTADENA FARMERS' MARKET

@Online Store: Pick-Up or Delivery AFM-

subscription.com. Order from Wed. 8pm until

Mon. 6am And then pick up next to Pizza of Venice

2547 Fair Oaks Ave.

Time: see above

Cost: current market's price

MON.-FRI.

ALTADENA SENIOR CENTER

@Congregate Dining

The YWCA of San Gabriel Valley sponsors dine-in

hot meal services.

Time: 11:45am on first come basis

Cost: Free

SAT MORNINGS

EATON CANYON NATURE CENTER

@Front of Nature Center

Saturday morning activities include a family nature

walk (9am). No dogs please. Nature Tales Story

Hour (1030am), Animal Ambassadors (10am and

12pm), and ECNA gift shop open

Cost: Free except for gift items

Times: various (see above)

ALL DAY EVERYDAY AA ONLINE

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@Virtual meeting on zoom

Help when you need it. Thousands of meetings 24-7.

In 16 languages and six formats aa-intergroup.org/

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Time: anytime

Cost: free

Altadena NEIGHBORS

April 2024

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Have feedback, ideas or submissions? We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 17th of each month. Go to www.bestversionmedia.com and click "Submit Content." You may also email your thoughts, ideas and photos to: mthatcher@bestversionmedia.com.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS
Altadena Sheriff's Station (626) 798-1131
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Fire Department (Station 12) (626) 797-1911
Altadena Community Center (626) 398-6174
Altadena Chamber of Commerce (626) 794-3988
Altadena Library (626) 798-0833
Pasadena Humane Society (626) 792-7151
Neighbors Building
a Better Altadena (626) 344-7806

CONTENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Content Due	Issue Month
November 17	January
December 17	February
January 17	March
February 17	April
March 17	May
April 17	June
May 17	July
June 17	August
July 17	September
August 17	October
September 17	November
October 17	December

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID LANDAU

Dear Neighbors,

There's a spirit in Altadena that you just have to love and encourage. It's a spirit of helpfulness. It can pop up at the most unexpected times -- like in the middle of a concert. Here is what happened recently, as told to us by Mary Landau and her son David, with other details filled in by Irina Voloshina, former Altadena Neighbors cover family and founder of Melodia Mariposa. David and his brother Daniel make up the cello-guitar duo The Brothers Landau and they perform professionally. The brothers write and record most of their songs.

On February 3rd, amidst the elegant ambiance of Melodia Mariposa's baroque concert, an unexpected halt in the music left the audience in suspense. As the trio of talented musicians, Joel Pargman on violin, Morgan Little on cello, and Jason Yoshida on lute, began their performance, a jarring sound pierced the air, bringing the music to an abrupt stop. Morgan Little's cello had encountered an unfortunate mishap -- the bridge and sound post had fallen off, rendering it unplayable.

In the ensuing silence, uncertainty lingered in the air. What would happen next? Then the true spirit of community came to the fore. David Landau rose from his seat and offered his own cello to salvage the evening's performance. Living near to Davies Hall, where the concert was held, David swiftly retrieved his baroque replica cello, crafted by Michael Fisher, who made more than 280 violins, violas, and cellos that are in the hands of soloists and top professionals in major orchestras all over the world.

The concert regained its momentum, and the music resumed, much to the relief and delight of the audience. Despite the unexpected interruption, the performance proceeded seamlessly, highlighting the remarkable talent of the musicians and the resilience of the human spirit.

David says about the event, "I was very happy to lend Morgan my instrument, as I know how jarring and gutting it can feel to not have one when you need it. My last cello was stolen in San Francisco on one of my Brothers Landau tours, and we had to source cellos from friends for the remaining three concerts (for one I played a 3/4 size, which must have been amusing to see). I'm just glad I could help Melodia Mariposa and fellow musicians. The musical community in Altadena and L.A. has meant so much to me over the years. I'm always happy to contribute in what small ways I can -- especially to Melodia Mariposa, which brought great art music concerts to Altadena during the height of the pandemic and continues to serve our beautiful town."

Mary adds that Morgan Little had been playing his cello at a much lower tone than usual. David explained that a Baroque cello is tuned to a lower pitch. "Morgan asked if he could tune my cello to the lower register and I said sure."

Mary says, "Because of this happening I now know more about cellos in general and pitch in particular. I also learned that it takes about 10-15 minutes for the cello to acclimate to the different pitch. Now you know, too."

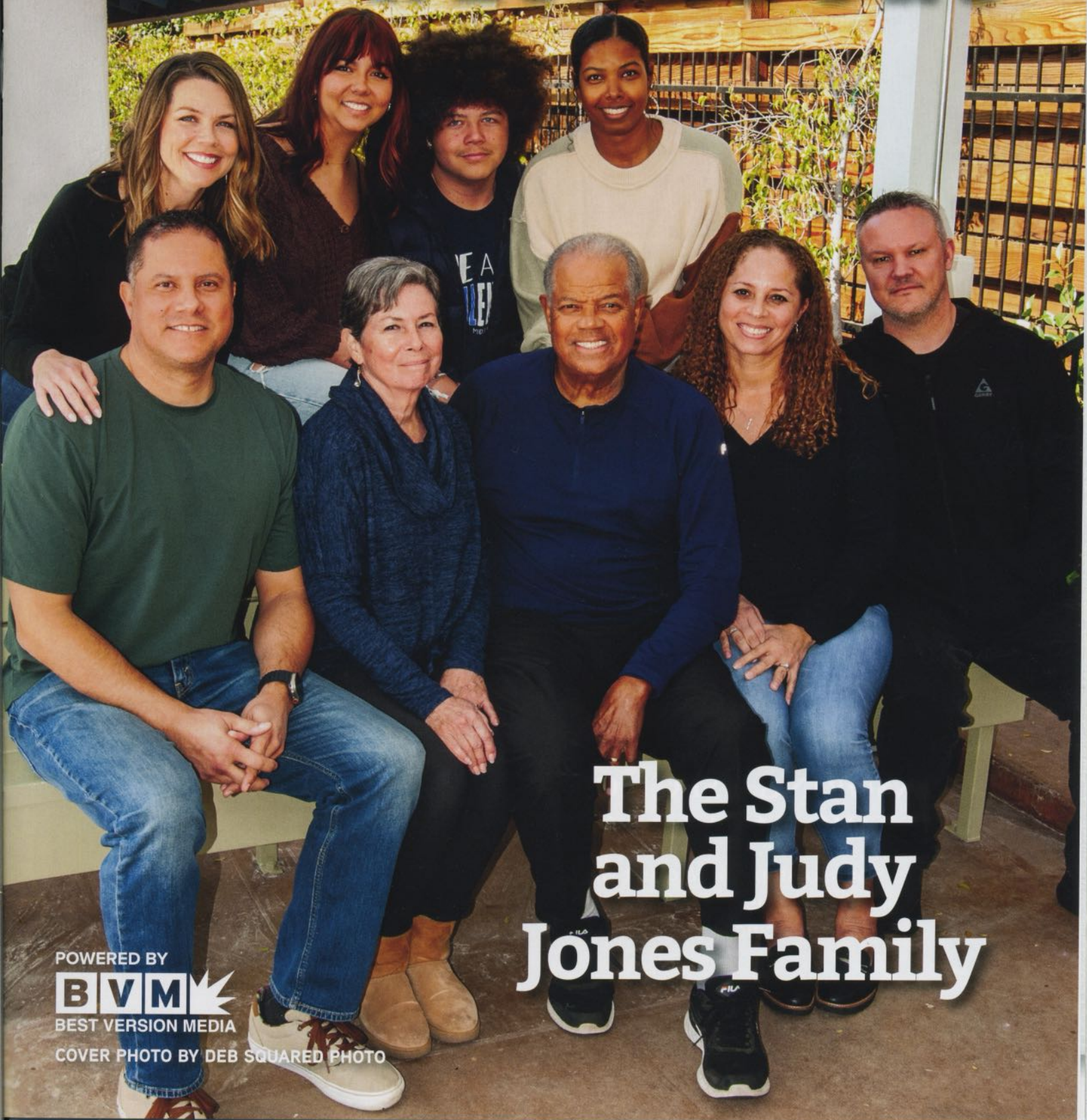
A bit more about David's cello. It's a 2006 Michael Fischer copy of a 1740 Domenico Montagnana cello, one of the very few baroque cellos that survived the 19th and 20th centuries without having its body size reduced ("cut down," as the process is called). "I love playing it and exploring all the rich and complex tones it produces." David is also studying the art of violin making.

Debbi Swanson Patrick

April 2024

Altadena

NEIGHBORS



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