

Le Grand Vision Centennial

Balboa Park + San Diego + Panama

2015 + 2016

By George Mullen

CENTENNIAL PREPARATION:

1. Establish and tie the Centennial Celebration to the very roots and meaning of the original *1915 Exposition* – that being the completion of the Panama Canal and the first ship to pass through the Canal and reach an American port, that being San Diego. Our goal is to make the Centennial a great ***Celebration of Life...a Centennial LifeBlast*** if you will...an event that will be remembered for generations and spur Balboa Park and San Diego to sing for the next 300 plus years.
2. Establish official interchangeable Centennial naming as ***“Balboa Park’s Centennial LifeBlast”*** and ***“San Diego’s Centennial LifeBlast”***. The Centennial event name is an important ambassador and needs to be enticing in order to draw would be tourists and conventioners, as well as our own citizens.
3. The ***Centennial LifeBlast*** will run from April 2015 until September 2016, approximately 18 months. Recognizing the significant ramp up time involved, and noting that one of our primary goals is to drive tourism to San Diego, it follows that 18 months would be better than just 12. (*The 1915 Exposition lasted for 27 months stretching from January 1, 1915 through March 31, 1917.*)
4. Obtain two to four major advertising sponsors for the ***Centennial LifeBlast*** – such as Qualcomm, Cricket, Budweiser, SeaWorld, Coca-Cola, Nike, etc.
5. Each of the 18 months will have a “monthly theme” and that theme will be sponsored, created and operated by the interested stakeholders. The monthly exhibits will be displayed in the *Plaza de Panamá*, as well as other appropriate Park locations. (*ConVis will be marketing the Centennial LifeBlast in order to draw tourism and convention business to San Diego. The monthly theme will be additive in that ConVis will have the added opportunity to market to specific industries and target groups based on each month’s theme. See point #18.*)
6. **San Diego - The City of Life, America’s Finest City** (aka ***La Ciudad de Vida***) - The City of San Diego will embrace this expanded version of its city identifier, as well as the Spanish translation, as critical tie-ins to the ***Centennial LifeBlast / Celebration of Life*** theme that orbits around the concept of ***“Life”***. Keep in mind the ***Life*** the Canal brought to San Diego, the ***Ships of Life*** flotilla, the ***Reach for Life*** regatta, Panama’s ***Bridge of Life*** Museum, the breadth of San Diego’s natural ***Life*** and biodiversity, San Diego’s ***Life*** Sciences industry, and so forth. (*The City of Life can always be dropped after the Centennial if so desired.*)
7. The official ***Centennial LifeBlast*** colors will be blue and yellow. The “blue” representing the water and waterways that brought ***Life*** to San Diego via Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo’s *San Salvador* flagship in 1542 and again in 1915 via the ships

- passing through the Panama Canal; the “yellow” representing the warmth of San Diego’s radiant sunlight and deserved reputation for great weather. *(The City of San Diego’s colors, official seal, and website are already in a similar wavelength. Moreover, the San Diego Chargers’ colors are also in sync and displayed all over the city – providing a passionate tie in that communicates with our populace.)*
8. Establish thematic blue and yellow airport and highway bridge art to greet all who enter San Diego city limits during the **Centennial LifeBlast**.
 9. Invite the San Diego Padres and San Diego Chargers to wear special **Centennial LifeBlast** colored uniforms during the 18 months of the Centennial. *(As high profile ambassadors for our city, this could be a great help in driving national attention to the Centennial, Balboa Park and San Diego.)*
 10. Establish a Sister City relationship between San Diego and Panama City (Panama’s capital) and work on joint **Centennial LifeBlast** concepts.

THE CENTENNIAL IN ACTION:

11. ***Ships of Life*** flotilla – On April 15, 2015 an international ***Ships of Life*** flotilla will pass through the Panama Canal and set sail for San Diego – representative of the first ship to do so in 1915. (Panama’s wet season runs from May 1st through November and would be best to avoid.) This voyage will be geared as a major media / internet / facebook / twitter event as the world tracks the progress of the ***Ships of Life*** flotilla from beginning to end. Once the flotilla arrives in San Diego Harbor circa May 1, the **Centennial LifeBlast** will commence. *(If indications of interest are strong enough for those wanting to sail along in luxury, we will approach Windstar, Carnival, Princess, and Holland America about arranging a special Cruise to accompany.)*
12. ***Reach for Life*** regatta – In conjunction with the ***Ships of Life*** flotilla, San Diego area yacht clubs will host an international invitational sailing regatta going from Panama to San Diego, named the ***Reach for Life***. *(“Reach” as an important sailing term.)* As the ***Ships of Life*** exit the Canal into the Pacific causeway, they will first sail under the *Bridge of the Americas* (*Puente de las Américas*) connecting the North and South American continents, then pass Panama City’s historic Balboa Yacht Club and the adjacent ***Bridge of Life*** Museum designed by Frank Gehry. The yacht club and museum will mark the regatta starting line. As the ***Ships of Life*** cross the line, the race will begin. How fitting that the race will begin near Panama City’s Balboa Yacht Club and finish near San Diego’s Balboa Park. A \$1 million purse will be the prize for the winning sailboat. *(Major regattas do not typically have purses. As such, a regatta with a \$1 million purse will attract competitive sailors from all around the world and be a major attraction.)*
13. Before the ***Ships of Life*** flotilla and ***Reach for Life*** regatta arrive in San Diego, the visible perimeters of Balboa Park will be draped in celebratory “blue” and “yellow”. *(Christo, the internationally renowned artist who created the 2005 orange Gates in*

New York's Central Park, would be an ideal candidate for such an effort. If we could enlist him, it would bring significant attention to the Centennial, Balboa Park and San Diego.)

14. As the ***Ships of Life*** approach San Diego, an armada of private craft waiting off shore will join in. The expansive flotilla will then be led into San Diego Harbor by the *USS Ronald Reagan* aircraft carrier, followed by tall ships *San Salvador*, *Star of India*, *California* and others. *(There could be over a thousand private boats of varying sizes participating – picture New York Harbor during the 1986 Statue of Liberty Centennial.)*
15. The flotilla will enter San Diego Harbor in the late afternoon or early evening. At nightfall a spectacular fireworks show will commence over the harbor with commensurate embarcadero parties.
16. At 3:00 pm the following day, a massive ***Centennial LifeBlast March*** will form on the embarcadero at the foot of Broadway. One half (led by San Diego's Mayor and California's Governor) will march east on Broadway, turn left on 5th Avenue, then right on Laurel and enter Balboa Park from the west. The other half (led by the San Diego City Council members and all the County Mayors) will simultaneously march south on Harbor, turn left on Market, turn left on Park, and enter Balboa Park from the south and east sides. The two marches will converge at the *Plaza de Panamá* where San Diego's Mayor will symbolically turn on the light switch for the ***Centennial LifeBlast***. *(“Blue” and “yellow” banners will hang from buildings, bridges and street posts everywhere possible along the march pathway; hand-held banners will be distributed widely; and the median of Highway 163 through the Park will be draped. The Coronado Bridge will have a giant looping “yellow” ribbon stretched between its 30 mission-arch support columns, complimented by the “blue” roadway and sky above, and waters below. From south of the bridge, downtown San Diego and Balboa Park will appear as a spectacular hand-wrapped gift.)*
17. The ***Centennial LifeBlast March*** will morph into the largest party ever held in Balboa Park. As evening takes hold, a super-spectacular fireworks show will commence with breathtaking light shows against Balboa Park's historic buildings.
18. There will be 18 “themed” months of Balboa Park programming sponsored, created and operated by the 26 plus Park Museums, 85 plus Park organizations, local industry leaders and other stakeholders. The goal is to keep San Diego's citizens and tourists fascinated and tuned in to the ***Centennial LifeBlast***. Here is what such a schedule might look like:
 - April 2015 – ***Ships of Life Ahoy Month***
(Continuous media / internet / facebook / twitter tracking of the flotilla's progress)
 - May 2015 – ***Centennial LifeBlast Kick Off Month***
(***Ships of Life*** and ***Reach for Life*** arrive)
(Ocean Focus – SD Port District, SD area yacht clubs, Downtown SD Library, Midway Museum,

Maritime Museum, SeaWorld, Birch Aquarium,
Scripps Institute of Oceanography, NASSCO,
Surf Industry, Surfrider Foundation, etc.)

- June 2015 – *Balboa Park + Panama Canal = Sisters for Life Month*
(Museum of Man, San Diego History Center,
Smithsonian, Downtown SD Library, etc.)
(LEGOLAND to build a massive Lego-model of the
Panama Canal in the *Plaza de Panamá*)
- July 2015 – *Art + Independence + Art Month*
(SD Museum of Art, Contemporary Art Museum,
Timken, Photography Museum, Mingei, SD
Symphony, SD Opera, Old Globe, etc.)
- August 2015 – *Natural Life + Biodiversity Month*
(SD Natural History Museum, San Diego Zoo,
Panama's **Bridge of Life** Museum, Smithsonian
Museums, SeaWorld, etc.)
- September 2015 – *United States Navy Month*
(U.S. Navy, Midway Museum, etc.)
(To coincide with Fleet Week)
- October 2015 – *Life Sciences + Biotech Month*
(BIOCOM, CONNECT, Chamber of Commerce,
EDC, Pfizer, Life Technologies, Salk,
Sanford-Burnham, Scripps, UCSD, Sharp, etc.)
- November 2015 – *United States Marine Corps Month*
(Coinciding with USMC birthday Nov 10)
- December 2015 – *Holiday Spectacular Month*
(Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims
Hindus, Buddhists, Atheists, etc.)
- January 2016 – *Technology + Innovation Month*
(Air & Space Museum, Reuben H. Fleet Science,
Automotive Museum, Chamber of Commerce,
CONNECT, EDC, Qualcomm, Cricket, etc.)
- February 2016 – *Higher Education Month*
(UCSD, SDSU, USD, Downtown SD Library, etc.)
- March 2016 – *Clean Tech + Green Tech Month*
(Industry leaders & environmental groups)
- April 2016 – *Helping Hands Month*
(Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, local Foundations, SD

Foundation, St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, United Way, Downtown SD Partnership, etc.)

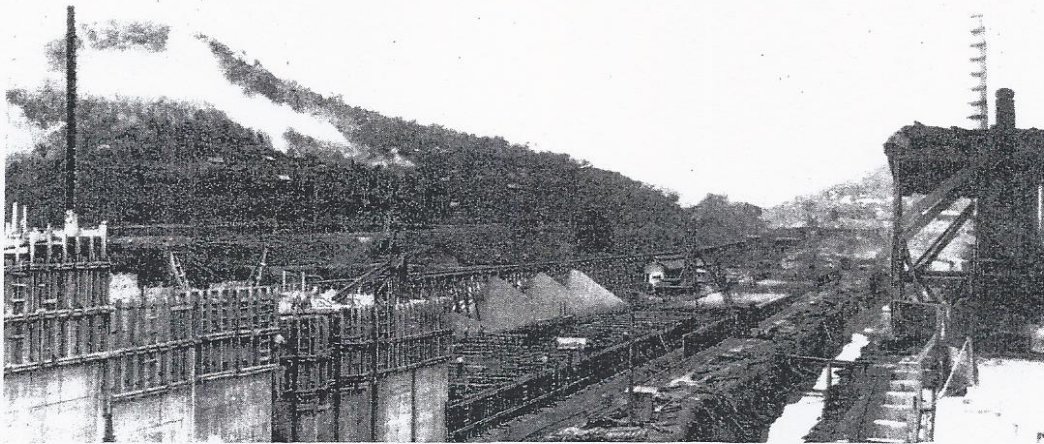
- May 2016 – *Latin American Conexión Month*
(Spain, Panama & Mexico connections; Cinco de Mayo) (6/26/11 UT article that 32% of San Diego County is now Hispanic; according to the Morey Group's August 2007 Survey, 52% of Balboa Park users are Hispanic)
- June 2016 – *Sportstown USA Month*
(Hall of Champions, SD Chargers, SD Padres, Olympic Training Center, area Yacht Clubs, Nike, Golf industry, Surf industry, etc.)
- July 2016 – *Comicon + Gonzo Creativity Month*
(Comicon extension in the Park, music festival, tattoo contest, filmmakers, writers, artists, photographers, etc.)
- August 2016 – *Summer Sizzle Month*
(Sand Castle building contest in *Plaza de Panamá*)
(Surf industry, Legoland, SeaWorld, SD Zoo, etc.)
- September 2016 – *The ART of ART Month*
(SD Museum of Art, Contemporary Museum, Photography Museum, Children's, Timken, Mingei, Symphony, Opera, Old Globe, etc.)
(*Ships of Life* sail out of harbor on 9/28/16 coinciding with Fleet Week)

19. ***Centennial LifeBlast Capping*** – On *Balboa Day* (September 27, 2016) there will be a capping party in Balboa Park with fireworks alternating over San Diego Harbor and Balboa Park culminating in a breathtaking finale over both. (Named *Balboa Day* because September 27th is the 503rd anniversary of Park namesake Spanish explorer *Vasco Núñez de Balboa* first setting eyes on the Pacific Ocean from the Isthmus of Panama in 1513.)

The very next morning, *Cabrillo Day* (September 28, 2016), a massive ***Centennial LifeBlast Capping March*** will begin at the *Plaza de Panamá* and end at the embarcadero at the foot of Broadway. (Named *Cabrillo Day* because September 28th is the 474th anniversary of *Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's* landing in San Diego in 1542.) The crowd led by San Diego's Mayor will then cast off the tall ships *San Salvador*, *Star of India* and *California* and they will lead the *Ships of Life* and a stream of private boats out of San Diego Harbor - a symbolic capping to a glorious 18 month ***Centennial LifeBlast*** for Balboa Park and San Diego.

20. Then silence...until we return for the ***125th LifeBlast*** that is...

A SAILING START TO THE PARK'S CENTENNIAL



**GEORGE MULLEN &
ESTER ARAUJO
GARCÍA DE PAREDES**

Most San Diegans see Balboa Park's coming centennial as either the anniversary of the park's building or the anniversary of the exposition. Few recognize that it marks something far larger and more profound, and with a global impact beyond compare. The centennial marks the 1915 completion of the Panama Canal – an extraordinary accomplishment for both the United States and Panama. The canal brought forth life in innumerable ways with a new unhindered movement of people, food stuffs, raw material, manufactured goods and even the U.S. Navy in times of war. The canal brought to reality a 400-year-old fantasy of finding or building an Atlantic to Pacific water passageway. The Panama Canal's creation forever changed the world.

The canal's impact upon Panama has been immense, but we also note the profound effects it has had on the development of San Diego. The connection began with the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 that celebrated the first ship to pass through the canal and reach an American port, that being San Diego. This celebration prompted the large-scale building of Balboa Park (named for Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa, the first European to cross the Isthmus of Panama in 1513 and see the Pacific Ocean) with the central plaza fittingly named Plaza de Panama.

The exposition brought worldwide attention to tiny San Diego (population 39,500) and put it on

track to become the beautiful metropolis it is today. You could say the Panama Canal brought great life to Panama, but you also could say it did the same for San Diego. The connection between San Diego and Panama is fascinating – as if the canal opened a “River of Life” between the two.

The flow of life resonates large in Panama as highlighted by the new Frank Gehry museum at the tip of the causeway on the Pacific entrance to the canal – named the Bridge of Life Museum. The bright parrot-colored museum depicts Panama as the great thoroughfare of natural life between North and South America and is scheduled for completion in 2012. Architecturally, the museum will be on par with Spain's Bilbao Guggenheim, also designed by Gehry.

Meantime, a number of San Diegans have been seeking a new identifier for San Diego along the same theme – the City of Life. There are many reasons why this label is a perfect fit, particularly when you consider the incredible natural biodiversity of the San Diego region. Though different in the content of their biodiversity, both Panama and San Diego are rich in life indeed.

The concept of life with respect to Panama, the canal, the Bridge of Life Museum and San Diego, is thought-provoking and poetic. With this in mind, we have something unique to propose, something focused directly on the real meaning of the centennial, and something with the ability to garner worldwide attention. We propose:

- San Diego and Panama City, the capital of Panama, form a

sister city partnership focused on celebrating the life the canal brought to Panama, San Diego and the entire world.

- An international flotilla of ships (Ships of Life) sail the same route in 2015 as the first 1915 voyage – passing through Panama via the canal, by Panama's new museum (Bridge of Life), and ultimately reaching San Diego (City of Life) as the first American port of call. This voyage has the potential to be a major media/Internet event as the world tracks the progress of the Ships of Life flotilla from launch until docking in San Diego Harbor.

Should San Diego's civic and sailing leaders choose to participate or captain sailing vessels within the flotilla, San Diego's well-deserved reputation as a world-class sailing destination will radiate.

Once the flotilla enters San Diego's harbor, the Balboa Park Centennial Celebration would begin – deservedly connecting the celebration itself to the waterways that originated it. Such a flotilla would bring worldwide attention to both Panama and San Diego, and be a boon to our respective tourism industries.

Most centennial celebrations are but a circus of pomp and circumstance with little long-term benefit to a community. It does not have to be this way with our centennial. We can have a celebration with real meaning, and one with the potential of a lasting impact on San Diego comparable only to the original 1915 exposition itself.

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MOVING FORWARD IN FOREFATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

GEORGE MULLEN

On Tuesday, it will be exactly 100 years since July 19, 1911, when San Diego officially broke ground on the 1915 Exposition construction projects, hosting a spectacular three-day celebration to mark the groundbreaking. This was the groundbreaking of the very projects that made Balboa Park what it is today.

To mark this noteworthy (but sadly unrecognized) centennial anniversary of San Diego moving forward on its most ambitious city project ever, we are bizarrely facing a Wyatt Earp-styled political showdown between the Promoters of Progress & Vision and the Defenders of the Status Quo.

If you remember only one thing from this article, please let it be this: If the ever-present defenders of the status quo had been allowed to rule the day in the 1910s, the Balboa Park we know and love today wouldn't exist.

The status quo-ers are no doubt good people striving to do what they think is best for Balboa Park and San Diego. But preservation does not mean permanently locking oneself into a time capsule. And even if it were so, who has the right to say what year or era we lock ourselves into? If we refuse to adapt to the times and needs of future generations, we create an environment by which the park's major philanthropists and benefac-

tors leave for concerns that do appreciate their efforts, funding steadily deteriorates, infrastructure needs go unattended (there is already a backlog of \$240 million needed repairs in the park), and ultimately the viability of the park comes into question. Sound alarmist? This has happened to many great parks in America over the years, including New York's Central Park.

In 1910, when the modern-day Balboa Park was under consideration, the city of San Diego had a population of 39,578, San Diego County 61,665,

preserving its past and providing greater accessibility to a population that has grown exponentially. From the park's beginnings, it has been the major philanthropists who have made great things happen – it was G. Aubrey Davidson and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce who originally proposed the Exposition idea, the Spreckels, Sefton and Marston contributions in time and money that gave it traction, and so on. Today, we are blessed with another great philanthropist family in this line of promoting progress – Irwin

George Marston (the civic leader largely responsible for the California Tower) gave a speech with these words: "On this rise of Balboa Park we here today dedicate the California Building to noble uses – the study of life, the history of man, the sciences and the arts, the high things of the mind and spirit." The study of life, indeed – we are a city that is living, breathing and adapting to the times and needs of our expanding population. The status quo is now and forever unacceptable.

I appeal to the San Diego City Council and all

Balboa Park attracts more than 10 million visitors per year. Clearly the times have changed and the Park needs to adapt by both preserving its past and providing greater accessibility to a population that has grown exponentially.

and tourism was minimal. In 2011, the city has a population over 1.4 million, the county has over 3 million, the greater Tijuana region has over 2.5 million, and the tourism business is off the charts in comparison. (The Convention Center & Visitors Bureau reports that in 2010 San Diego County had over 29 million visitors, with 15 million-plus overnight visitors.) Balboa Park attracts more than 10 million visitors a year. Clearly times have changed and the park needs to adapt by both

and Joan Jacobs. Their reputation for great deeds in San Diego is without question, and they have now proposed a plan aimed at both preserving the park and providing greater access to millions of visitors. Furthermore, they have pledged to raise \$25 million of the \$40 million cost of the project themselves. If this plan is embraced, countless generations will enjoy the Plaza de Panama as the pedestrian plaza it was originally intended to be.

When the 1915 Exposition opened on Jan. 1, 1915,

San Diegans, that on this centennial anniversary of the groundbreaking of Balboa Park, we join together again and stand firm for continued progress in our beloved park. We have a spectacular Centennial Celebration in 2015 to look forward to and prepare for. Let's start our preparation on July 19 – just as our forefathers and mothers did in 1911.

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