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A Proposal for the Queen of Brentwood

L.A. Sniper: Come home, Yvonne, to a penthouse suite at King-Harbor Hospital

~ By ALAN MITTELSTAEDT ~

~ This Willowbrook resort offers rooms with unbelievable views ~

There's a palace of sorts right in the heart of the rough-and-tumble 2nd District that would make perfect living quarters for **County Supervisor Yvonne Burke**. It's set back from the road. King palms grace a formal, circular drive. A spacious lawn, stretching nearly a quarter-mile, creates an air of royalty. It's even got a marquee with her name already on it in big letters.

From our vantage point, if the Queen of Brentwood had moved into one of the vacant wings in the downsized King-Harbor Hospital, she could have avoided the nasty and demeaning inquiry into whether she's been missing-in-action from her troubled district for the past year or so. And, more importantly, she may have had a fair shot of turning things around at the hospital known for its reckless disregard of human life. Her diligence certainly would have won her the respect of her constituents and peers on the board.

Burke, in a wide-ranging interview with L.A. Sniper this week, insisted she is "more than a full-time supervisor" and that she had done all she could to save the hospital, whose fate is now in the hands of the federal inspection team. But heck, the building's got her name on it. Her reputation rises or falls with its future. What if she had shifted into overdrive and moved into King-Harbor to provide a steadying influence on the staff

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during these tumultuous times? If nurses and doctors on duty May 9 had thought the Queen of Brentwood was toiling upstairs in the maternity ward, would they have allowed Edith Isabel Rodriguez to writhe in pain before dying 45 minutes later of a perforated bowel on the floor of the emergency room lobby?

"I'm not a doctor. I'm not an administrator. I wouldn't know if they were doing something right or wrong. I cannot micromanage," said the 74-year-old Burke in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. "If there are things we see, like a staff person of mine, we point it out."

We had hoped to shoot a photo spread of the vacant rooms to make the move to 12021 Wilmington Ave. as appealing as possible to Burke, but the hospital quickly amassed two security guards, two county police officers, and a nursing supervisor to foil our plans Sunday afternoon. A sign at the hospital entrance warns: "No cameras or radios."

As for the death of 43-year-old Rodriguez, Burke remembers watching one of the early training sessions ordered by the new management of the hospital. "I felt everyone was trying very, very hard. I can't explain how that incident happened with Mrs. Rodriguez. I don't know how those lapses could occur."

Burke said she last visited King-Harbor three weeks ago and that her staff members remain involved in monitoring the hospital's progress. Even if she doesn't want to sleep there, the Queen of Brentwood should station herself at the hospital during every available waking hour. Few things that go on in local government are as important to the community as the existence of a vibrant hospital.

You might think that an aging solon like Burke, who is about to enter the final year of her fourth, four-year term on the county Board of Supervisors, deserves some slack before vanishing into her retirement, which she announced last year. But an investigative story last week by the L.A. Times' Jack Leonard and Matt Lait ensures that Burke will leave, at the very least, under a cloud when her term is up. She could even face charges by the District Attorney's Office.

Community activist Najee Ali is one of those who want to see her in court. **"It's been well known in South Central Los Angeles that Burke has never lived in the district she was elected to represent," says Ali, whose brand of rhetoric often borders on hyperbole. "It's important that the black community hold officials more accountable."**

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Ali says, "She is so far removed that it affects her work performance. She is out of touch, which is why we have a crisis at King-Harbor hospital and it is facing closure."

Who knows what will become of the hospital, and if it closes, how hundreds of thousands of residents will receive medical care. What is clear is that the reform efforts, ordered into place by the five county supervisors last October, never truly caught on. Control of the hospital was handed off to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, but change has often come too slowly. One sign of the troubled transition is, well, the signs themselves. It's been nearly 10 months since the takeover orders went down, but the old signs – reading "King-Drew" – remain in place. The **Queen of Brentwood** dismisses this as a small matter. Ali thinks otherwise.

"Obviously the community was quite, and still is, resistant to any change, whether that be longtime medical administrators or simple things like changing the signs," says Ali. "That's part of the problem. You have an elderly group of leaders that have resisted change for the betterment of the hospital."

You can't help but wonder what would have come of King-Harbor had all five supervisors been fighting to save it. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, who hosts the Los Angeles Urban Roundtable in Leimert Park on most Saturdays, said that Burke has had "absolutely no support" from her board colleagues for keeping the hospital open. "It had a demoralizing effect on her. She has been a lone voice."

Burke is getting a raw deal from the press and her critics, Hutchinson insists. She should not be penalized for her less than fiery style. "Supervisor Burke has been much more quiet, behind the scenes, what I consider the professional bureaucrat."

It likely will fall to the Queen of Brentwood's replacement to rebuild a quality health care system in the 2nd District. Let's hope the new supervisor denounces the past practices of individual supervisors protecting their fiefdoms to the detriment of a vital dialogue on the most pressing issues of life and death.

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Video link of Burke's Fraudulent activities to prove that she is in violation of the Los Angeles County Charter in that Yvonne Burke Lives in Brentwood: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZRJCs34g0k

Link to a video of the truly Fraudulent Burke Making Lame Excuses for Violating the Residency Requirement of the Los Angeles County Charter: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1my-_w7U4-k&mode=related&search=YvonneBurke

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http://lacounty.info/charter.pdf

ARTICLE II.

Board of Supervisors

Section 4. The County of Los Angeles shall have a Board of Supervisors consisting of five members, each of whom must be an elector of the district which he represents, **must reside therein during his (or her) incumbency**, must have been such an elector for at least one year immediately preceding his (or her) election,[5] and shall be elected by such district. Their terms of office shall be four years, and each shall hold until his successor is elected and qualified. No person while a member of the Board of Supervisors shall receive any compensation, in addition to that provided for by this Section, for services rendered to any public or governmental entity. They shall each receive as compensation for their services a salary, payable monthly from the County Treasury, which shall be the same as that now or hereafter prescribed by law for a judge of the Superior Court in and for the County of Los Angeles, except that retirement benefits shall be those now or hereafter provided by law for officers and employees of the County of Los Angeles.[6] They shall devote all their time during business hours to the faithful service of the public.

[5] *Smith v. Evans, 42 Cal. App.3d 154 (1974) hold a one year residency requirement in a city charter to be in violation of the equal protection clause.*

[6] *Article XI, Sec. 4 (former Sec. 71/2) of the State Constitution, fairly constructed simply requires a county charter to make provisions for compensation of supervisors; it does not require nor state explicitly that such compensation shall be set forth and fixed in charter itself. Brown v. Francisco,123 Cal. App.2d 413, 266 P.2d 951 (1954).*

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