



**CANAL REHABILITATION** — A groundbreaking ceremony for the Venice Canals rehabilitation project was held last week at Dell Avenue and Sherman Canal. (Photo by Helen O'Niell)

## Groundbreaking held for long-delayed Venice Canals restoration project

BY ALAN EYERLY and DAVID HIRNING

Looking around at the crowd gathered for a groundbreaking ceremony at the Venice Canals last week, Councilwoman Ruth Galanter commented that many of those in attendance probably had not been born when the deteriorating canals were declared unsafe in 1940.

The Italian-style canals were built in 1905 as part of developer Abbot Kinney's grand plan for a Venice of America.

But the waterways soon fell into disrepair and were eventually closed to the public on the eve of World War II.

Now, 52 years later, the canals are being rehabilitated in a \$6 million project that is expected to take 12 to 15 months. Property owners near the canals will pay \$2.7 million of the bill through assessments over a ten-year period.

The G.A. MacDonald Construction Co. will perform the rehabilitation work, which will include:

- replacing all canal sidewalks;
- excavating the canals — currently 2½ to three feet deep — to an eventual depth of five feet at the center line;
- lining the canal walls with hollowed-out concrete cylinders, called Loffelstein, to a height of 4½ feet;
- laying a 5½-foot-wide gravel area up to a depth of one foot next to the Loffelstein concrete block retaining wall;
- replacing seven of the nine pedestrian bridges "in-kind," which means using the same materials and form as the current bridges;
- constructing a special historic section on the north end of the Grand Canal, between Venice Boulevard South and Venice Boulevard North; and
- restoring habitat and native plant life, including pickle weed and salt grasses.

The canals must be drained

during construction, but endangered species laws require that the Grand Canal be filled with water from April through September. Because of this, the work will be done in two stages, draining first the finger canals and then later the Grand Canal.

In the draining of the finger canals, dams will be placed where the smaller canals connect to the Grand Canal.

The historical section between North and South Venice Boulevard will attempt to restore some aspects of the canal entrance to its 1905 condition.

A boat launching ramp for nonmotorized craft will be constructed.

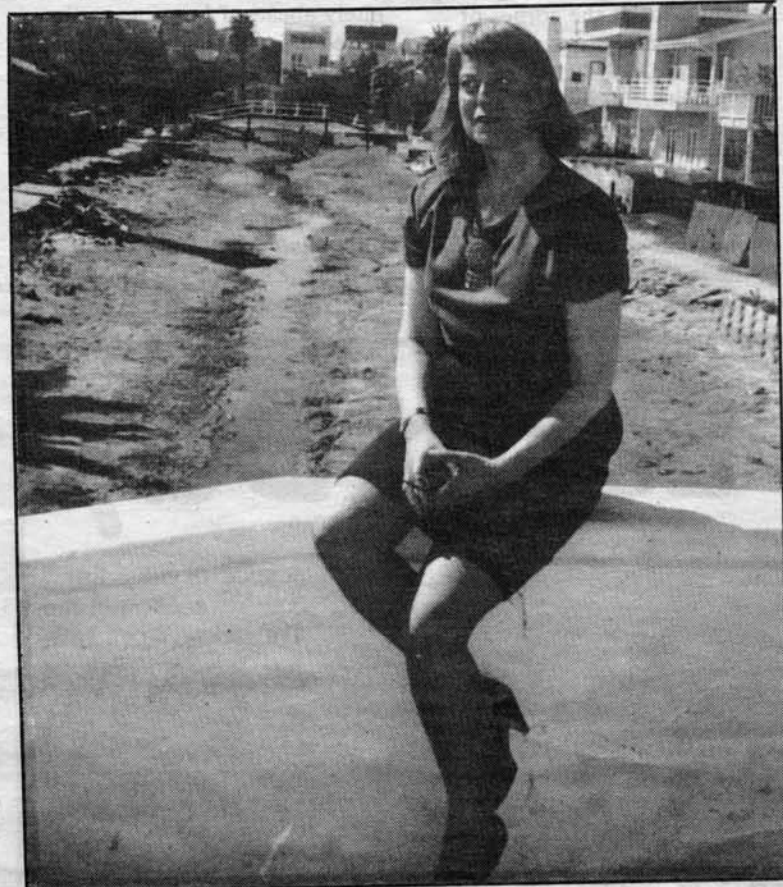
The pedestrian bridge over the Grand Canal will be arched, as it

was when the canals first opened. The original cornerstone, with the original construction firm's name, will be restored.

Caltrans will also construct a ramp for handicapped access, and there are plans for a plaque explaining the history of the canals.

"We are finally undertaking to repair the canals in a way that optimizes their environmental value, public access, safety and aesthetic appeal," Galanter said.

"This restoration project does that as well as any alternative we considered, and it has the support of most of those being asked to pay for it," the councilwoman said.



**COUNCILWOMAN** — Among the speakers at the canals groundbreaking ceremony was Los Angeles City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter. (Photo by Helen O'Niell)

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