

An Eternal Sunday in Isla Vista

A Peak Inside Friendship Manor

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PAST THE BLACK GATES of Friendship Manor, Debby Clark and Fran Smith sit across the empty pool while a cover band plays “La Bamba.” Clark, adorned in pink, sits in a plastic lawn chair while Smith, dressed in blue, sits in her electric wheelchair. Despite Clark only residing in the manor for the past three months and Smith for five years, they have become fast friends.

At the Manor, “People are really nice. They help you out and check in on you,” Clark said.

For most of us, our lives in Isla Vista will be remembered as the rosy-hued embodiment of our college days—something we will look back on and tell our grandchildren about with nostalgic grins. Tales of the adventures we had running down the messy, crowded streets with friends and the days we spent tanning under the Isla Vista sun. But not for all. Tucked in between undergraduate housing on El Colegio Road is Friendship Manor, Isla Vista’s local retirement home.

Friendship Manor succeeds where UCSB fails, providing affordable housing for its senior community.

Friendship Manor was formerly College Inn, a privately owned student housing facility. The dormitory was bought in 1973 and converted into a retirement home. When IV faced a decline in the number of students seeking housing after the 1970s riots and Bank of America Burning,

College Inn no longer had enough students looking for IV housing to fill its halls or coffers, forcing its owners to consider bankruptcy.

Patricia Fabing, the Marketing Director of Friendship Manor, shared the story of how the dorm was converted into a retirement home. “Six different laymen from local churches got together and formed this 501c3 not-for-profit retirement community called Friendship Manor. Originally, it was advertised for those aged 62 and over as \$99 and two meals a day,” Fabing said.

The Manor’s non-profit, tax-exempt status keeps the price affordable. Although it may not be \$99 anymore, many residents are quick to say the \$900

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rent and three meals per day are what brought them to the Manor.

Bill Barrison, who has to inform people to speak up because the music is loud and has a hearing aid, never meant to stay at Friendship Manor despite spending the last 11 years there.

“I moved here temporarily eleven years ago. The reason I moved here is because my wife and I got a divorce after 50 years,” Barrison said. “We had a house, and we were selling it. I was going to buy her out, but the house got too expensive, and I couldn’t afford to buy her out. So I was

looking for a place to rent with no luck. There was no place in Santa Barbara or Goleta that I could afford.”

Barrison was planning on staying for a few months at most. He recounted visiting the Manor for the first time. “I had a friend

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who had a friend who died who used to live in Friendship Manor, so I came to look at it, and I said, ‘I don’t think this is for me.’” But the cheap rent, the accommodations, and the friends he made kept him at the Manor. “Unfortunately, those of us who are here are here for a while. Then we die,” he said matter-of-factly.

The Manor currently houses 215 residents, ranging in age from 62 to 92 years old. They come from all walks of life, making the Manor a treasure chest of wisdom. Particularly, the manor houses a trove of artists who thrive on the laid-back Santa Barbara attitude.

Resident Patrick Wells Lindley, 77, works as a principal musician at UCSB Theater and Dance Department and stays at Friendship Manor for one particular amenity.

“I moved in here because they have one of the best Steinway pianos in the city,” Lindley said. “I played a concert here, then moved in shortly afterward.”

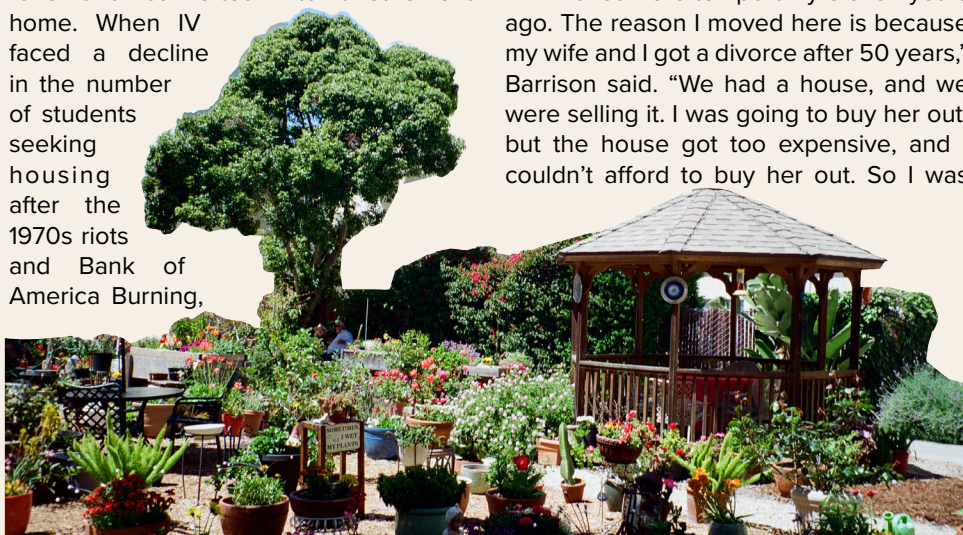
The cover band starts up again and Lindley leaves to dance in front of the pool, but not before looking around to admire the Manor. “I’ve been more creative here than I was before I moved in here,” he said.

On a lazier Saturday, Lindley shows off the grand piano, which inhabits the second floor of the main building. The clear, bright sound of the piano fills the room as he plays. No music sheets are needed—he plays from memory. It’s a beautiful image of the grand piano and Lindley at its helm. He plays confidently, his fingers moving deftly and without hesitation. Lindley’s cheerful and bright personality shines through in his music. The music and talent embody an artist who would move to an Isla Vista retirement for the grand piano it houses.

Friendship Manor is a dreamland for those who love vintage furniture like the grand piano. Solid wooden tables and ornate chairs can be found around the hallways. Artwork made by the residents hangs on the walls. The Manor, despite its cold exterior, has a warm interior.

The residents’ apartment doors are decorated with bold statements like “Animal abusers deserve jail,” an array of “I Voted” stickers, and more than a few cat collages.

The hallways are filled with personalities, showing that the Manor lives up to its mission’s statement: “As faithful stewards of the spiritual, human, and financial resources available to us, we are dedicated to providing housing and services that enrich the lives of our elders who cannot afford or qualify for them elsewhere.”





The Manor not only enriches the lives of the residents but also the surrounding Isla Vista community. Near the front desk of the Manor, the residents can find sign-up sheets for local events organized by Chris Redssy, the Activities Director. The residents have signed up to attend the SBCC Symphony and Jazz Ensemble and Local Walk Wednesdays, all of which had full sign-up sheets.

Fabing shares that the Manor can live up to its mission statement with the help of volunteers. "It definitely is a challenge these days because of inflation, but Friendship Manor has always had wonderful and supportive oversight by a volunteer Board of Directors," Fabing said. "The students who volunteer their time to help our residents with current technology issues have been great. Also, a shout-out to Goleta Library for their mobile book van. I still have some very avid readers among our population."

Volunteers are always welcome at Friendship Manor, and the residents are always happy to chat. UCSB Communication Professor Nikki Truscelli has collaborated with Friendship Manor and its residents on projects involving virtual reality and incorporated the Manor into classes Truscelli teaches at UCSB.

Truscelli specializes in relational communication and close relationships. "I love Friendship Manor. I think the residents are amazing and inspiring. I think the leadership is fabulous. I highly encourage the community to find a way to get connected," Truscelli said. "They are a part of the IV community, and those intergenerational relationships are just so important, and they benefit both parties equally."

It's easy to fall in love with the Manor. Time slows when you enter. The conversations that take place within its walls are somehow deep, meaningful, light, and fun. Anyone can get involved at Friendship Manor by contacting Activities Director Chris Redsey.

As a visitor, departing Friendship Manor is difficult, as the residents have endless fascinating stories to share. The garden's vibrant colors and the gazebo's shade are overwhelmingly inviting. The outside world seems bleak in comparison to the friends inside the Manor. It is abuzz with the energy of an eternal Sunday, relaxed and at ease with no particular place to be.

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