



Margot enjoyed the tour of the new impressive National Park Service visitor center at King Gillette Ranch on May 29, 2012. This special tour was arranged by former Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Superintendent Woody Smeck and Acting Superintendent Lorenza Fong. Margot especially appreciated that the visitor center had earned an LEED platinum environmental designation. This was because her husband, Stan Feuer, in conjunction with a UCLA professor, had patented the process for the first roof-mounted solar heating system in the 1950s. Left photo pictures Margot and son Zach Feuer. Right photo includes Lorenza Fong and Kate Eschelbach of the National Park Service..

Southern Californians, who will start their adventures at the new Visitor Center. Without Margot, it is possible that the Gillette Ranch and the ideally located Visitor Center may never have materialized and the park as we know it, may have been a much smaller treasure than it is today. Being in the mountains will hopefully refresh, inform and inspire people, as they did for Margot. But these mountains will always be vulnerable and require protection. We need to all rise to the high standard of leadership, stewardship and vision, as set by Margot, to insure their future well-being.

Until her death, Margot served for more than two decades on Save Open Space/Santa Monica Mountains' board. Margot Feuer's family requests any remembrances of Margot be donations to: Save Open Space, Box 1284, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. The Save Open Space website is [www.saveopenspace.com](http://www.saveopenspace.com).

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Feuer Family with sons Mark, Zach, and Josh, Thanksgiving 1995.

## A Tribute to Margot Feuer (1922–2012)

### Happy Birthday Santa Monica Mountains National Recreational Area!

*Remembrance of the Founding Mothers  
 of the Park & Founder's Day Celebration*

November 10, 2012



Margot Feuer (far right) at her 89th Birthday with Save Open Space board members (from left to right) Sue Boecker, Cynthia Maxwell, Mary Wiesbrock, Bob Coutts and Fran Coutts

# The Santa Monica Mountains and Margot Feuer (1922–2012)

## *Past, present and future*

The Santa Monica Mountains have held their ground for millions of years. Within the last month, the reach of the mountains has expanded, their sanctity has again been threatened and their staunchest advocate has passed away. Margot Feuer, devoted advocate for the Santa Monica Mountains, died at age 89 at her home on June 16. Margot's vision, leadership and absolute unwavering dedication to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) has made our national park a reality. She was the driving force protecting the integrity of our national park for over four decades. The Santa Monica Mountains have lost a fierce, devoted, brilliant champion.

Margot grew up in Connecticut, exploring the shoreline of Short Beach and hiking the trails outside New Haven. She realized early in life and was an early believer that "Wilderness, ocean, nature must be shared to contribute to character building. Nature is character."

She married Stan Feuer after moving to Los Angeles in 1965, and later the couple decided to move to Malibu in search of a more "country" life for their three sons, Josh, Zach and Mark. Their move came as Los Angeles County was considering approval of several thousand new homes on the western edge of the Santa Monica Mountains. Margot began attending weekly meetings of the Malibu Citizens for Good Community Planning. She was instrumental in the lawsuit brought by the Center for Law in the Public Interest, which compelled the County to adopt environmental guidelines to protect Malibu and the pristine regions of the Santa Monica Mountains. This was the beginning of meaningful protection for the 50-mile long section of the mountains that runs from the Hollywood Hills to Pt. Mugu State Park.



*Margot, Ahmanson Ranch house*



*Left: Margot, hike leader Rorie Skei (MRCA), Mary Wiesbrock, and Janna Orkney at the Lasky Mesa, Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve (2009).*

*Below: Save Open Space awards Frank Angel for his winning lawsuits which saved Gillette Ranch (2004): Back row-Jim Wrigley, Sue Boecker, Margot, Frank & Meredith Angel, Front row-Jill Swift, Joan Kay, Mary Wiesbrock and Isabel Snyder.*



Later Margot joined the Malibu Township Council, and was at the forefront battling a proposed eight-lane highway through Malibu Canyon. Recalling the spectacular citizen's revolt that beat back that ill-conceived plan, Margot opined, "Democracy is a wonderful experience."

In the 1970s, Margot led early efforts to create a national park in the Santa Monica Mountains, protecting them from development and opening them to a greater population. She repeatedly traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby for park status and land acquisition funds. In 1978, the legislation passed and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) began to officially take shape.

Planning and advocacy for the new park consumed the last three decades of Margot's life. As one of the leaders of grassroots organization Save Open Space/Santa Monica Mountains, she was a powerful force in the effort to add three major parcels to the park: Jordan Ranch (once proposed for 1,152 housing units and a golf course, now 2,308 acres of park land); Ahmanson Ranch (proposed for 3,000 housing units and two golf courses, now 5,400 acres of park land and re-named Las Virgenes Canyon) and the historic King Gillette Ranch (588 acres saved from the development plans of Soka University).

In 1996, Margot helped to prepare a study articulating the need for a central and accessible visitor center for the SMMNRA. She understood that the park was within reach of 25 million people in Southern California, with 500 miles of hiking trails. The report, titled "We need to tell them we're here", focused on the need for a visitor center that was well located and welcoming. The Gillette Ranch, located at the corner of Las Virgenes Road and the Mulholland Highway, was identified as an ideal location.

Fast forward to June 2012: In no small part due to Margot's vision and tenacity, the new King Gillette Ranch Visitor Center opens. The historic ranch stables have been transformed into an inviting, solar-powered visitor center with exhibits on the 450 animal species and 26 distinct plant communities within the park.

In the week before the public opening of the visitor center, Margot was invited to tour it. In one of the exhibits, there is a section of large concrete pipe, demonstrating the safe passage corridors installed in the park for animal crossings. In her inimitable style, Margot got down on her 89-year old knees and insisted on experiencing what a wild coyote does when crawling through the pipe — typical of her ever-curious mind.

The Santa Monica Mountains will certainly be expanding their reach, welcoming even more



*Sue Nelson, Jill Swift and Margot Feuer led the effort to create a national park in the Santa Monica Mountains*