

BRUCE DOUGLAS (1950-2022)

BRUCE DOUGLAS, FORMER LA HABRA HEIGHTS MAYOR and former member of the La Habra Heights City Council, Planning Commission, General Plan Advisory Committee and Roads Committee during his exceptionally active 33 years as a resident, passed away at his Heights home on September 30 at the age of 72.

Bruce was born in Modesto, California, on June 16, 1950. His father Gerald was an attorney and his mother Marguerite was a teacher. He grew up on a street full of rambunctious boys, including his two older brothers who occasionally dragged him along on their numerous (and sometimes harrowing) adventures. His family loved nature and took many trips to Yosemite, where Bruce developed a lifelong passion for hiking and other outdoor activities.

Following his high school graduation, Bruce attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, until the 1970 riots disrupted the campus, after which he moved back to northern California and worked as a wildfire fighter and surveyor.

After a few years of roughing it, Bruce studied engineering at the University of California, Davis, graduating at the top of his class with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in geotechnical engineering in 1977, when he moved to Long Beach to take a job with Earth Technology Company.

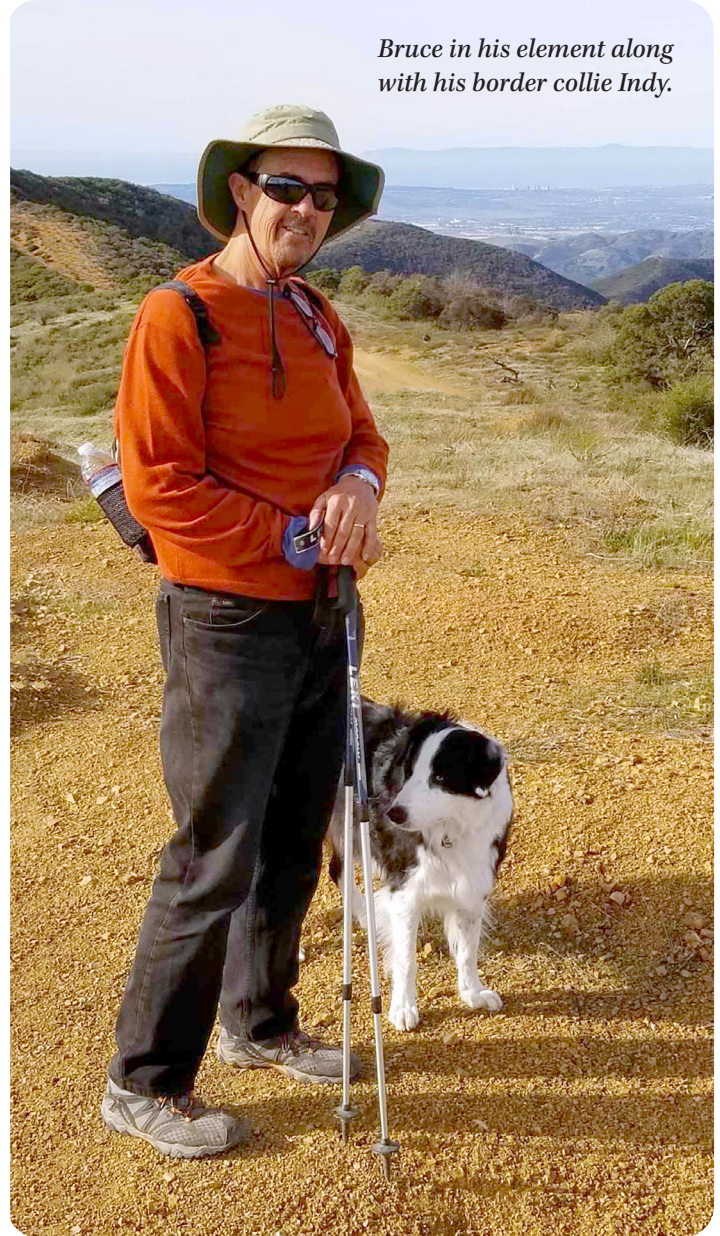
Bruce was one of those who pioneered the use of then-new cone penetrometer technology to determine soil properties. He and his crew went to Alaska to test the stability of the permafrost, and he later traveled to China to demonstrate how the technology could help predict devastating earthquakes in that country.

Along with two colleagues, Bruce formed a successful food service company that eventually served hundreds of businesses and schools throughout Los Angeles County and Orange County.

Bruce and his wife Ellen married in 1989, the same year that they moved to La Habra Heights. When the couple attended a meeting about stopping development of a golf course and residences in nearby Powder Canyon, it became Bruce's entrée into local politics, to which he energetically devoted himself for nearly three decades.

Because of his love for the outdoors—especially hiking, biking, climbing and watching wildlife—Bruce was passionate about maintaining the 300+ acres of Powder Canyon as a wilderness area. He was among those who worked tirelessly—and successfully—to help persuade Heights residents to vote against development in 1993.

Later Bruce served on the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority Board and the Hills for Everyone board of directors (2006-2015) to oversee protection of Powder



Bruce in his element along with his border collie Indy.

Canyon and the wildlife corridor. Claire Schlotterbeck, Executive Director of Hills for Everyone, commented: "Bruce loved the land from the ground up. More than just enjoying its beauty, he used his energy to protect it for others. When your eyes rest on natural ridgelines, you will know he was here."

ROAD REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Bruce had noticed that roads in the Heights were in poor and deteriorating condition, so in 1994 he volunteered for the newly formed Roads Committee and put his engineering expertise to optimum use. He walked and surveyed all 42 miles of Heights roads and, along with fellow committee members Dick Caslow and John Smith, recommended a five-year program that would bring pavement up to an acceptable level. He also helped create "On Top of the

Heights,” a series of mailers to educate residents and obtain their approval for planned improvements. Once funding was approved and repairs began, Bruce carefully monitored contractors’ work and established standards to prolong pavement integrity. He was a committee member until 2018. Dick Caslow noted: “Bruce served on the Roads Committee for nearly 25 years. No one worked harder or longer to ensure the maintenance of our roads than Bruce.”

Also in 1994, Bruce began a three-year term on the Planning Commission, which included not only many public meetings, but hours of behind-the-scenes work. Brian Bergman, former mayor and current city councilmember, observed: “Bruce was an energetic individual who made significant impacts on our community. I know how hard Bruce worked, because every time, over the years, whenever I went down to City Hall, he was working with the city attorney and staff drafting documents.” In 2001, Bruce began a second three-year term on the commission.

UPDATING THE GENERAL PLAN

Later in 2001, Bruce also became vice-chairperson of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) tasked with updating the La Habra Heights General Plan. After more than 30 public meetings, numerous subcommittee meetings and many volunteer hours working with the city staff, Bruce made major contributions to the updated 75-page General Plan and all the detailed city ordinances that supported it. He not only saved the city thousands of dollars in consulting fees, but also helped produce ordinances specifically tailored to La Habra Heights. Fellow GPAC member Mike Cole recalled: “Bruce was without a doubt the leading force in updating the city’s General Plan. His leadership was instrumental in guiding the other committee members in processing the various elements of the General Plan.”

As a pragmatic engineer, Bruce’s vision was that city ordinances would be working documents that would be periodically updated. Because one of his goals was to encourage remodeling of older homes, he helped establish ordinances flexible enough to allow development that was consistent with General Plan objectives.

CITY COUNCILMEMBER AND MAYOR

Bruce served on the La Habra Heights City Council from 2003 through 2007, including a year as mayor in 2005 (his official portrait is shown at the right). During this period, the council held final public meetings and legally adopted the updated General Plan and ordinances on which Bruce had spent so much time. While on the council, Bruce also focused on improving city finances, public safety and weed abatement.



Bruce, Ellen and Cameron in the Swiss Alps in 2016.



Whenever his busy schedule would permit, Bruce and George Edmonds, his best friend and business partner, would take off on expeditions hiking, mountain biking, climbing and generally adventuring—frequently with Bruce’s border collies Shady and Indy (see photo on the previous page). The two friends climbed 14,505-foot Mount Whitney, the highest mountain in the contiguous United States and the Sierra Nevada range, and often hiked in the San Gabriel and Santa Ana Mountains.

Bruce also enjoyed traveling with his family, including several trips to Scotland (the homeland!) and other European destinations, as well as many snorkeling trips to the Caribbean, Tahiti, Cook Islands and Mexico.

He was very fond of working in his Heights yard. “Every weekend he was out there slaving away—clearing brush, creating pathways, installing a sprinkler system for the entire yard. One of his favorite birthday gifts was an 18-station irrigation timer box,” Ellen said. “He also created a 1,200-gallon koi pond with a multi-tiered waterfall, arched bridge and pagoda-style shed. All the electrical and plumbing—two pumps and various filters—work perfectly but remain mysterious to outsiders.”

During his more than three decades in La Habra Heights, Bruce became known as a champion of privacy and space and an ardent defender of our unique rural lifestyle. Ed Borrowe, former mayor and councilmember who appointed Bruce to the Planning Commission, put it this way: “Bruce expended literally thousands of volunteer hours behind the scenes using his intellect, brains, engineering degrees, talent and love for our community to benefit La Habra Heights and all residents. He was dedicated, competent and determined.”

Bruce is survived by his wife Ellen, son Cameron of La Habra, daughter Megan of New York City and his two brothers, Loren and Barry.