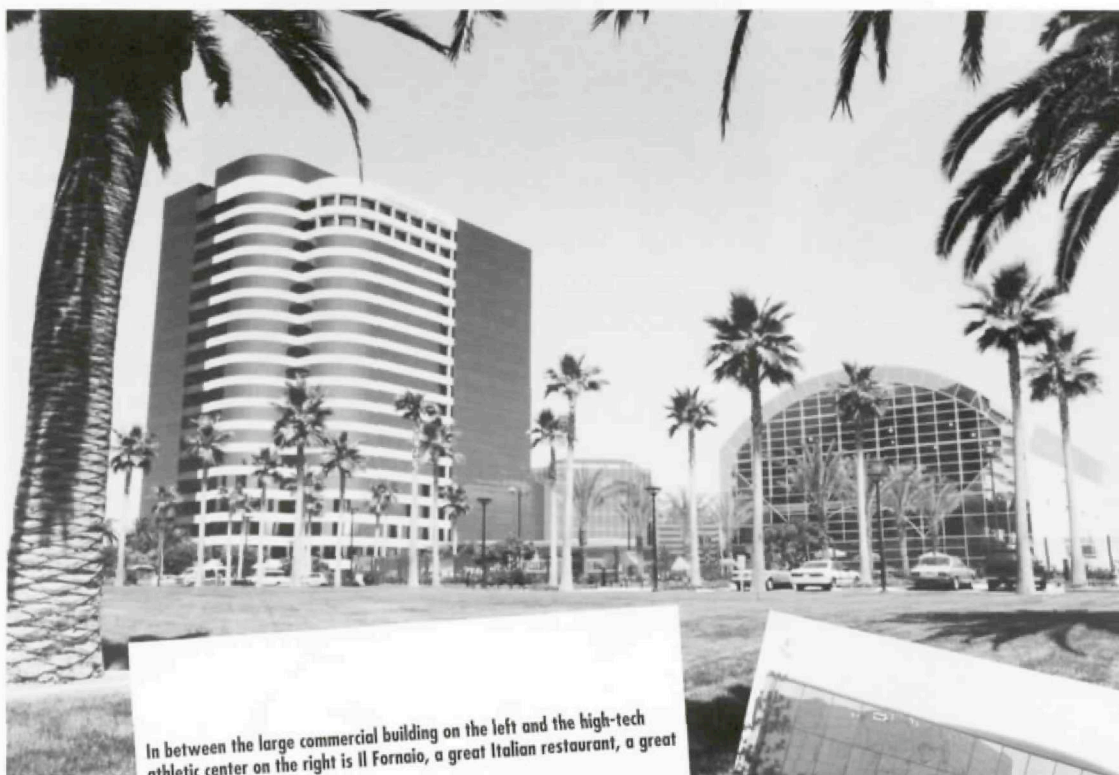


I'll Take Irvine

TRUMAN POLLARD

After 11 years designing automobiles for Honda in Torrance, California, I accepted the position of chief designer for Mazda Research and Development in Irvine, California. At my exit interviews, each manager asked, "Are you leaving so you can live in Irvine?" Everyone I spoke to just assumed that if I was going to work in Irvine then I was going to live in Irvine, and to them, I was going to live the American dream.

I commuted my first year at Mazda, 40 miles from my home in Torrance, and I discovered that Irvine had a deserved reputation as an example of white flight from Los Angeles. It was populated by



In between the large commercial building on the left and the high-tech athletic center on the right is Il Fornaio, a great Italian restaurant, a great place to watch people.

Photograph by Truman Pollard

My home on the corner, across from 20 acres of Northwoods Park. This is the northernmost area of Irvine, a refreshing mixture of traditional homes interlocked with greenbelts, city parks, and farmland.

The city of Irvine was incorporated in 1971, and within its 41.9 square miles is a variety of villagelike communities, each with its own distinct personality. Westpark is known for its combination of rich landscaping and Mediterranean architecture. The University Town Center, adjacent to the University of California, offers a distinctive academic atmosphere. There is even a neighborhood that resembles Cape Cod. Some of the oldest residential areas were developed with small, affordable housing, and the city can still provide homes that are competitive with the rest of Orange County. At the high end is Turtle Rock, a hillside community with a mixture of single-family detached and attached houses and apartments designed to preserve the natural terrain.

people who were seeking the yuppie lifestyle – a kind of suburban prison where things like choosing your own colors for the house or putting up a basketball hoop over the garage are simply not allowed. But I also discovered that those opposed to these restrictions were simply less experienced in the ways of property values. The idea of giving up some individual freedoms becomes important to a community of people who want control over the sights and sounds of their neighbors.



Northwoods Park: the view from my front door of 100-year-old eucalyptus trees left over from the Irvine Ranch.

There is nothing about Irvine I don't enjoy. A map of southern California shows that Irvine is advantageously located between and around three major free-ways that form an arrow pointing toward San Diego. This may not seem very important until you consider that the migration pattern of people leaving Los Angeles is always to move either north or south. It is also a popular belief that the only thing keeping Los Angeles and Orange counties from joining up with



A reflective-glass office building. In the early seventies, mirror glass was certainly in vogue. The successful formula in Irvine is straight monolithic designs plus mirror glass minus high-wire poles plus an ample supply of trees and landscaping to equal a forestlike environment that lasts all year long. Even ugly buildings can look good with enough trees in front. The buildings simply become backgrounds that reflect the natural colors and light.

San Diego County is the fact that Camp Pendleton Marine Base, located right between L.A. and San Diego, serves as a divider, with a few good men keeping southern California from becoming its own state. If anything happens to the base, my family and I may have to go farther south again to discover the American dream.

Mirrors and trees, the same formula, creating a dynamic contrast to high-tech architecture, integrating it with the human need to breathe.



On my commute to work, I pass acres of peppers, orange trees, and tall rows of corn. For the first time in my life I get to observe the seasons changing through the cycles of planting and harvesting. This view from Northwoods shows the skyline of the Irvine business area, the helicopter marine base utilizing two old blimp hangars built in 1942 (and designated a national monument in 1978), and fields of peppers in the foreground.

