

# CHC fetes 20th anniversary

Foster Davidoff, the founding president of Crafton Hills College, will be the keynote speaker today at the convocation which will launch the 20th anniversary celebration of the college.

Davidoff will talk at 10:15 a.m. in the Performing Arts Center.

The convocation will also include the inauguration of the college's newest president, Dr. Luis Gomez. Admission to the convocation is free.

A luncheon at 12:30 in the Orton Center in Redlands will feature Davidoff and others

who were influential in the design and inauguration of the college which overlooks the Yucaipa Valley.

Included in the luncheon lineup will be Ray Ellerman, San Bernardino Community College District (SBCCD) superintendent (chancellor) during CHC's opening year; William Grigsby, first year assistant superintendent for SBCCD; Stuart Williams, chief designer of the campus and Davidoff. Each speaker will give a short presentation about the beginning stages of CHC.

The convocation and luncheon will kick off a series of events, to take place during the 1992-93 academic year, celebrating the college's service to the community for the past 20 years.



# 20 years later

## Crafton Hills College stands test of time

By PATRICK FITE  
CHC communications  
Special to The News-Mirror

On Sept. 11, 1972, Crafton Hills College (CHC) opened its classrooms and laboratories for its premier classes.

College and district officials described the new campus as a "button-buster" with its imaginative architecture, manicured grounds and spectacular surroundings.

With its 20th anniversary year about to begin, the college's unique architectural style has withstood the test of time. Located high above the valley and surrounded by an undisturbed natural wildlife environment, the ultra modern buildings were designed for style, durability and function.

"This was one of the most challenging projects I ever worked on," said Palm Springs Architect E. Stewart Williams, the chief designer of the campus and buildings. "I think that's one of the reasons I enjoyed it."

Among the other projects Williams' firm has designed are the Desert Museum in Palm Springs, the Palm Springs City Hall, the College of the Desert, the Palm Springs Civic Center, the Palm Springs Desert Hospital and the two passenger stations for the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. In fact, before designing the Desert Museum, he invited the museum's board of directors to visit CHC.

"They were very impressed," said Stewart, who will be visiting the campus Sept. 16 in recognition of the college's 20th anniversary. "I think the visit was very instrumental in their decision to give us the job to do the museum."

The initial construction at CHC included the administration building, the cafeteria, the Student Services building (with the clock tower), the classroom building and the first floor of the library.

Fifty-one firms and approximately 2,000 people labored to create these first buildings. The total cost was \$8 million. Williams estimated that the same construction job today would cost, at the very least, \$25 million.

Buildings constructed at CHC in the following eight years included the Performing Arts Center, the gym, the Occupational

Education buildings and the second and third floors of the Library. The entire campus took 10 years to complete at a total cost of \$20 million.

Prior to designing CHC, Williams visited the Yucaipa site to explore the steep, hilly terrain crisscrossed with motorcycle trails. He noted that it was not their first choice for a site, but it became the primary location because the land was donated by Los Angeles industrialists and philanthropists Lester and Ruben Finkelstein. The two brothers had a lifelong interest in projects that offered opportunity to youth. All told, the brothers donated 522 acres of land for the college.

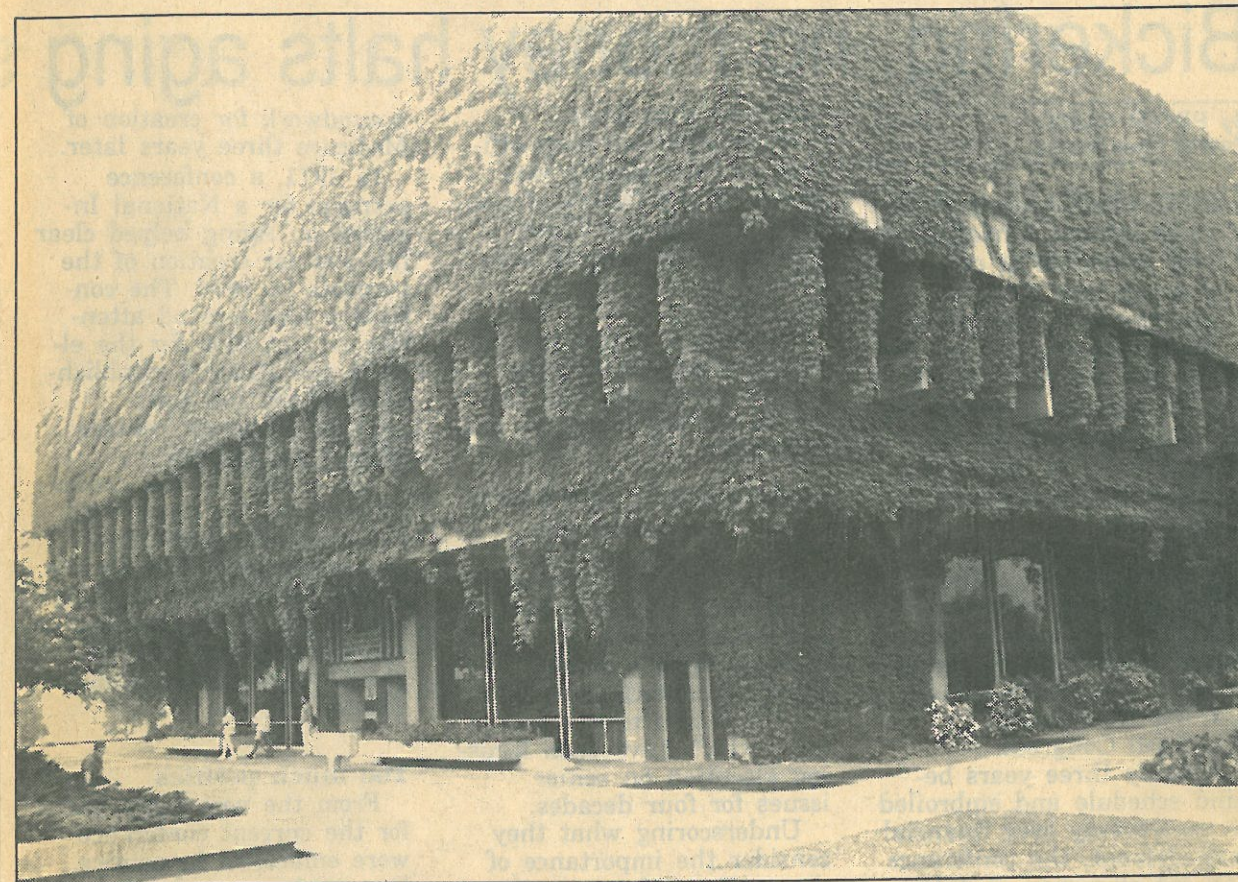
"It was beautiful," Williams said about the location high above the valley. "I imagined an acropolis. But it was going to be a challenging job."

The history of the design and construction of CHC began as far back as 1966. After examining a number of presentations from a series of architectural firms, the San Bernardino Community College District (SBCCD) Board of Trustees and the SBCCD administrations elected the firms of Williams and Williams, John Porter Clark; and Jones, Poper and Armstrong to work together as the Valley College Architects' Collaborative. Their assignment was to plan the construction of the new college.

Once the Collaborative had been given the go ahead by the SBCCD Board of Trustees, Williams was given the task of forming the overall design concept and then doing the masterplanning of the entire campus.

The initial construction required moving more than one million cubic yards of dirt to make the spaces more compatible for the buildings. At the same time, however, Williams made sure not to disturb the beautiful environment surrounding the actual building site. In fact, part of the land is currently designated as a wild life sanctuary.

Williams decided the buildings should be constructed of concrete for practical as well as artistic reasons. On the practical side, concrete made sense because of the fires that sweep through Southern California and because of earthquakes. Also, once



### Ivy-covered walls

The Crafton Hills College Library building is shrouded in ivy. The school celebrates its 20th anniversary today.  
Photo by Ken Levy

completed, the structures would not require maintenance, painting or refinishing.

Regarding the artistic value, Williams believed concrete was an interesting material because it was beautifully textured and "you can shape it anyway you want."

Rather than using the natural gray color of the concrete, Williams decided to add a warmer touch by mixing an earth color into the concrete. "The color blended in with the olives, browns and greens of the hills," Williams said. "The entire campus is very unified in its feeling."

The concrete buildings were steel reinforced and built on top of foundations that included heavy steel matting. The Administration Building's top floor is supported by gigantic concrete piers reinforced with thick steel rods.

"Generally speaking, the buildings are very solidly built and properly reinforced," Williams said. "It was a good engineering job."

Because the terrain contained such nar-

row ridges, Williams decided it would be easier for students to get from one end of campus to the other by walking under buildings rather than around them.

"I also thought that a junior college should be an exciting place for its students," he said. "They should look up and, perhaps look through the buildings to vistas beyond their immediate surroundings."

Funding for construction of CHC campus was originally approved by citizens of the district in a special election in 1967. The SBCCD Board of Trustees and the district's administration at the time decided on a pay-as-you-build basis, a tax override. The voters concurred, passing an override of 20 cents on each \$100 assessed valuation for a period of 10 years. As a result, once the entire project was completed in 1980, it was paid for. There were no bonds and nothing was owing.

For the average home-owning taxpayer at the time, the cost worked out at roughly a penny a day — (A total tax payment of about 35 cents per month.)