

**1657 Ocean Avenue
Chez Jay
Santa Monica, California
City Landmark Assessment Report**

Evaluation Report
Photographs
Appendix



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City of Santa Monica
Planning Division

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1657 Ocean Avenue – Chez Jay
City of Santa Monica
APN: 4290-015-901
City Landmark Assessment and Evaluation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Description of site or structure

The subject property consists of a one-story restaurant building situated on the west side of Ocean Avenue between Pico Boulevard and Colorado Avenue. It is located on Lot 3 of Scotts addition to the Santa Monica tract. Erected in 1947, the restaurant sits on an 80-foot by 160-foot parcel on the western edge of the Santa Monica Civic Center.

The property was identified in the Santa Monica Civic Center Specific Plan EIR (2004) and found to be ineligible for the National Register or local register, but eligible for special consideration in local planning (what was then a 5S3 status code, now a 6L status code). The property was re-evaluated as part of the Santa Monica Citywide Historic Resources Inventory Update (2010) and was found eligible for listing as a City of Santa Monica Structure of Merit (5S3*). As such, the property met Structure of Merit Criterion B2 – representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent. From the significance statement for the re-evaluated property: “This property, known as Chez Jay, is an excellent example of a nautically themed restaurant of the type that was once prevalent in Santa Monica but is now virtually extinct. Under the same ownership since the early 1960s, the building and integral neon sign have not experienced significant alterations affecting its physical or historical integrity.” It is not within the boundaries of a designated or previously identified potential historic district.

Building Permits. In 1946, an application for an outdoor sign costing \$200 was received by the City (applicant name illegible). The following year, in 1947, owner Tom Kabbash retained architect Britton S. Shriver to design an apartment and restaurant building for an estimated cost of \$17,500. Also that year, a permit for a 38-foot “barricade (canopy)” was issued with Kabbash as owner and Shriver as architect. In 1948, another permit – this time for two-story “apartments” with no mention of a restaurant – was issued by the City for owner/contractor Kabbash with L. Harris serving as architect; the estimated cost was \$11,500. A permit for a new \$400 post sign was issued to The Dawn Motel as owner in 1951. In 1954, a permit for “two face V type signs” costing \$40 was issued to the Dawn Café with Dads Root Beer Company listed as contractor. Owner Mollie Podvin (with Jay Fiondella identified as lessee) applied for a permit in 1959 to enlarge an existing window located near the west end of the restaurant’s north elevation and erect a fence for the total cost of \$200 for the Dawn Café and Motel. In September of 1959, under the ownership of Chez Jay, the City issued a permit for a projecting neon sign to be located near the restaurant’s southwest corner [note that a sign similar in design to that illustrated on the permit was actually installed near the restaurant’s northwest corner where such a sign currently exists]. A plan check application was prepared in 2003 –

with the City's Redevelopment Agency listed as owner – for the demolition of “abandoned apartments” at 1657 Ocean Avenue. The description of work stated, “Construct new surface parking lot in the footprint of existing structure to be demolished.”

Description

Exterior: This one-story building, known as Chez Jay, is an example of a vernacular restaurant typical of the late 1940s. The long and narrow wood frame building is situated on an east-west axis. It features a flat roof with overhanging eaves. Stucco and horizontal wood siding sheathe exterior surfaces. A distinctive architectural element typical of the early postwar years is the portion of the west and south elevations that angles outward from the edge of the overhang. Centering the primary elevation is the front entrance with its wood door punctuated by a small porthole window of which the upper half opens towards the street. A low concrete planter with curved edges fronts the sidewalk and south parking area. A portion of the planter contains shrubs, banana trees, yucca trees, and other flora; the portion to the south of the front door has been filled with concrete. A flagpole rises from the southwest corner of the concrete planter. Towards the rear of the property are a mature Canary Island Date Palm and other mature trees. Nautically themed murals wrap around the top portion of the west, north and south elevations, and a large faux concrete clamshell decorates the south elevation. A non-original evaporative cooler is attached to the building's south elevation. On its west façade, the original neon “Chez Jay” and “Cocktails” blade signs, and “Seafood Steaks” neon tubing, enhance its period character. The building's secondary north elevation is utilitarian in design with various windows and service entrances.

Originally, an L-shaped motel building was attached to the restaurant at the rear. Several former motel rooms remain that are currently used for office space or storage. Fenestration for the motel wing consists of steel framed fixed and casement windows. Original to the design, the motel wing, although capped by a low-pitched side gabled roof, actually sits higher than the restaurant (as noted by the interior steps that rise from the restaurant to the motel portion). A distinct break in the roofline delineates the restaurant portion of the building from the former motel wing. The remainder of the motel has since been demolished and the space used for a driveway or surface parking. Overall, the exterior of the remaining restaurant portion of the subject property exhibits a high level of physical integrity.

Interior: Chez Jay's interior consists of a long narrow combination bar and dining room; the bar opens to the kitchen; a small corridor at the back of the restaurant leads to restrooms, Table 10, and up several steps, the office, meeting room, and motel wing at the rear of the property. A row of burgundy colored banquettes lines the south side of the restaurant; three tables with wood chairs occupy the center. Red and white checkerboard tablecloths cover each table. The long bar is faced with wood and fronted by a dozen vinyl-covered barstools. The bar occupies the north side of the space and is sheltered by a red and white striped canvas awning attached to a wooden mast suggestive of yacht rigging. Similar red and white canvas awnings decorated with Christmas lights hover

over the banquettes. Mixed into the sawdust on the floor are peanut shells from the bowls of in-house roasted peanuts served to every patron. Framed photographs, mementos from Jay's adventures, and other ephemera hang from interior wood walls throughout the restaurant. An antique brass diver's helmet sits above a small vestibule with the bar on the left and the kitchen on the right. The booths themselves feature red canvas wall coverings framed by thick nautical rope with ship's lanterns serving as sconces.

The front door is split halfway with the upper half – punctuated by a small porthole – swung open to the sidewalk. Upon entering, a large wooden ship's wheel greets the customer. To the left against the wall is a jukebox and the back of the slanted former window now infilled with wood and covered with framed ephemera. At the back of the bar above the liquor bottles and glasses is a wide but narrow horizontal window facing north. Adjacent to the right is a glazed porthole window. Above the horizontal window hangs a large mounted tuna.

Separated from the main dining room by a wall but open to it via a large rectangular cutout (currently containing a pair of mounted sailboats) is the small space known as Table 10, which consists of a long table with banquettes on either side. A large porthole on the south wall above the table is open to the parking area. Accessed from a small corridor, the entrance to Table 10 originally could be closed via hanging curtains. Although the curtains have since been removed, the curtain hooks remain. A rolled up shade above the cutout can still be unrolled for privacy.

A review of historic photographs and a conversation with longtime Chez Jay co-owner Michael Anderson confirms that the restaurant's interior, including many of the framed photographs, mementos, and other ephemera, remains very much as during its heyday when Jay Fiondella co-owned the property.¹

Statement of Historical Importance

Chez Jay is a nautically themed bar/restaurant famous for its almost 50 year association with adventurer and raconteur Jay Fiondella and for its legacy as a combination dive bar and celebrity hangout during the same period. Operated for many years on Jay's behalf by his widowed mother (who died in 1991) and, since the late 1970s, by co-owner Michael Anderson, Chez Jay – under Anderson's sustained management and co-ownership with Jay's daughter, Anita Fiondella Eck – continues to serve as an important symbol of Santa Monica's history as welcoming to a diverse range of humanity from ordinary tourists, beach bums, transients, and locals to musicians, RAND employees, politicians, and television and film stars.

In 2009, author Jon Stebbins, with the assistance of Jay Fiondella prior to his death in 2008, completed a biography of Jay and a history of the bar/restaurant titled "It Happened at Chez Jay's."² The manuscript elucidates and documents in remarkable detail Jay

¹ Interview with Michael Anderson by Peter Moruzzi, July 11, 2012.

² Jon Stebbins, "It happened at Chez Jay's" unpublished manuscript. Note that the manuscript lacks page numbers.

Fiondella's extraordinary life and how his bar/restaurant, Chez Jay, was both a product and reflection of Jay's flamboyant personality, particularly in attracting celebrities to the establishment where he ensured their safety from autograph-seeking, camera-toting tourists, prying reporters, and paparazzi. The manuscript includes numerous quotes from Jay as documented by Stebbins.

NOTE: The following summary of Chez Jay's history is derived primarily from Jay Stebbins' biographical manuscript. Due to obvious limitations of time and budget, we were not able to research and determine the accuracy of this history.

According to Stebbins, Jay was familiar with the Dawn Café on Ocean Avenue where one day the café's insolvent owner offered Jay the lease on the establishment for a mere dollar. Agreeing to the deal, Jay utilized his already formidable connections to finance the conversion of the café into a bar and restaurant to be called Chez Jay. Jay's establishment opened in July, 1959. The first celebrities attracted to Chez Jay were British: Vivian Leigh, Peter Finch, Vanessa Redgrave, Richard Burton, Peter Sellers and others. Around the same time, Chet Baker, Slim Gaillard and other jazz musicians performed at weekly Chez Jay jam sessions arranged by Jay. Ferus Gallery artists such as John Altoon, Ed Kienholz, and Ed Ruscha were also regular customers.

Portholes: The portholes visible on Chez Jay's north and south elevations were reportedly recovered from one of the notorious pre-war gambling ships that sunk in Santa Monica Bay.

Table 10: Table 10, the small single-tabled room at the back of the restaurant separated from the dining room by a wall (with opening that could be blocked by a roll down shade) and a once-curtained entrance, is the part of Chez Jay associated with the establishment's most renowned exploits.

According to Jon Stebbins, the following occurred at Table 10:

- Peter Sellers impressed Jay and other customers with his ability to mimic characters from many nationalities.
- Warren Beatty entertained so many girlfriends while behind closed doorway curtains that Alice Fiondella removed the curtains to prevent such shenanigans in the future.
- Henry Kissinger dined there, which is why Jay henceforth referred to Table 10 as "The Kissinger Room."
- Daniel Ellsberg reportedly passed the "Pentagon Papers" to a *New York Times* reporter at Table 10 in 1971.

Peanut in space: Astronaut Alan Sheppard was a regular patron of Chez Jay in the 1960s becoming a good friend of Jay. In 1971, as Commander of Apollo 14, Sheppard hid a Chez Jay peanut in a 35mm film canister, which he brought with him to the moon.

Commander Sheppard presented Jay Fiondella with the “Astro-nut” that Jay had given to him to take to the moon and back. A photograph of Jay and his mother Alice as they take possession of the “Astro-nut” from Apollo 14 Commander Alan Sheppard on March 29, 1971 verifies the story. According to Stebbins,

...for a time [Jay] just kept [the nut] behind the bar and brought it out to show people when the conversation inevitably turned to the Moon nut. Everybody wanted to see it. Too many people wanted to touch it. Finally the situation hit a critical point when Jay showed it to Steve McQueen. The legendary actor snatched it out of Jay’s hand and tossed it in his mouth. With the Astro-Nut positioned between his front teeth for all the gasping witnesses to view, McQueen was ready to crack the shell and swallow. Jay shouted, ‘No Steve...don’t do it...it’s radioactive!’ McQueen coolly dropped it out [of] his mouth into his hand and placed it back on the bar...slightly saliva coated...but fully intact.³

Apparently, that was the last time the peanut appeared in the bar as Jay placed it in a safe deposit box where it remains to this day.

Episodes, stories, myths and legends: It is remarkable that a modest bar/restaurant would be associated with as many often outrageous and seemingly unbelievable stories as Chez Jay. In addition to the Ellsberg legend, there is the tale of Lee Marvin driving his motorcycle through the front door to order a drink, the story of Frank Sinatra visiting the “joint” in its early days, or the account of Chez Jay as the place “where ...Peter Lawford met certain starlets and whisked them off to his Palisades Beach home where a young President John F. Kennedy was often waiting.”⁴ It’s where actor Richard Harris serenaded Chez Jay customers after a few drinks, and the site where Chez Jay regular Beachboy Dennis Wilson’s ghost supposedly has been seen haunting the bar.

Celebrities: Stebbins’ manuscript includes photographs of numerous celebrities dining or partying at Chez Jay. Celebrities such as Mark Harmon, Dominick Dunne, Lee Marvin, Pamela Austin, Elizabeth Taylor, Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Barbie Benton, Arnold Palmer, Jack Lemmon, Woody Harrelson, Michael Keaton, Robert Stack, Rob Lowe, Stanley Tucci, the Smothers Brothers, Angie Dickinson, director Nicolas Roeg, Senator John Tower, Governor Jerry Brown, Wayne Gretzky, and Larry Bird. It must be noted that Jay’s insistence on banning cameras from Chez Jay severely limited photographic documentation of the many other people of note who drank or dined at his establishment.

Although currently undocumented by photographs, Chez Jay was host to the plausible patronage of, in alphabetical order, Julie Andrews, Fred Astaire, John Belushi, Lenny Bruce, Richard Burton, Johnny Carson, Kevin Costner, Bette Davis, Doris Day, Robert DeNiro, Joe DiMaggio, Clint Eastwood, all of the Fondas, Judy Garland, William Holden, Peter Lawford, Robert Michum, Jack Nicholson, Julia Roberts, Peter Sellars,

³ Jon Stebbins, “It happened at Chez Jay’s” unpublished manuscript.

⁴ Ibid.

Frank Sinatra, Bruce Springsteen, and Jonathan Winters. Attached as an appendix is a three-page list of these and many other celebrities who were regulars or just visited Chez Jay as compiled by biographer Jon Stebbins.⁵ Unfortunately, time and budget constraints limited research that might have authenticated the hours spent at Chez Jay by many of the names on the list.

In 2012, Chez Jay remains one of the few longtime celebrity hangouts in Greater Los Angeles. Gone are the Brown Derby, all of the famous nightclubs, Chasen's, and most of the fine restaurants of the era. What remains are Musso & Frank in Hollywood, Spago in Beverly Hills, and Dan Tana's in West Hollywood. But these are all large well-known celebrity haunts. As summarized by author Stebbins, "...Chez Jay's is as inclusive as it is secret. Everyone who's anyone knows about it, and a whole lot of nobodies who are no one know about it too. It's the best little worst kept secret in L.A. If you can understand that, then you'll understand Chez Jay's."⁶

Person(s) of Historical Importance

Over his long life Jay Fiondella (1926 – 2008) was a law student, bartender, actor, balloonist, yachtsman, treasure hunter, boxing promoter, record producer, theatrical producer, playboy, celebrity confidant, and co-owner of a modest bar/restaurant on Ocean Avenue in Santa Monica called Chez Jay.

Jay hailed from New Haven, Connecticut in a beach resort community where, according to Jay, "I grew up in a party atmosphere."⁷ Following his service in World War II, Jay utilized the GI Bill to study law at the University of Miami. During this time Jay married but the marriage soon failed, though it produced his daughter Anita who, since Jay Fiondella's death, is now the co-owner of Chez Jay. Regarding this period Jay said "I loved college, I'd still be going if my GI Bill hadn't run out, but it did and my wife divorced me, so I went to Hollywood to be a movie star."⁸

Jay Fiondella arrived in Southern California in 1951, taking acting classes and getting small roles in movies. He was also a bartender at Sinbad's on the Santa Monica Pier. A connection made at the bar led to a role on "Sea Hunt" and his obtaining a Screen Actors Guild card. Later, throughout his life, Jay would be cast in small acting roles in a substantial number of films and television shows.

It was while bartending at Sinbad's that Fiondella first encountered the Dawn Café where he would go to nurse frequent hangovers. As noted above, Jay acquired the café's lease when the owner sold it for one dollar and washed his hands of the enterprise. With the financial support of a wealthy friend Jay remodeled the café into what became Chez Jay.

⁵ Jon Stebbins states that the list of celebrities that visited Chez Jay came from Jay himself, who wrote down the names for Stebbins, who has a copy of the list.

⁶ Jon Stebbins, "It happened at Chez Jay's" unpublished manuscript.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

As word spread about the famous British actors who patronized the restaurant, other celebrities began to visit Jay's modest enterprise, an occurrence that would continue for the entirety of Jay Fiondella's ownership of Chez Jay.⁹

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jay's primary residence was a small wooden house on the beach in Malibu known as Jay's Sugar Shack. It was here that Jay's playboy reputation achieved its zenith with him being named *Cosmopolitan's* "Bachelor of the Month" in November, 1970. Also in 1970, Jay was profiled in *Los Angeles Magazine* standing in front of his beach shack with a bikini clad woman in the background. According to Stebbins, "He was a featured 'eligible bachelor' on TV's Dating Game no less than three times, while he regularly danced the nights away at the Playboy mansion as a guest of his friend Hugh Hefner."¹⁰

During these wild times, Chez Jay was managed by his mother Alice who had moved from Connecticut to Santa Monica to help her son run the restaurant in the early 1960s. She never left, becoming a popular and beloved fixture at Chez Jay who wouldn't hesitate to throw out a misbehaving or foul-mouthed customer on numerous occasions. In addition to working up front at Chez Jay, Alice also managed – and resided at – the Dawn Motel, which was part of the property. According to many, Alice often provided free rooms to down-and-out artists, musicians, beach bums and others who came into the restaurant with their hard luck stories. Among her many qualities, her charity and compassion made Alice a much beloved figure. In 1991, at age 89, she was killed by a speeding car when crossing the street in front of the restaurant. According to Stebbins, "she nearly became as famous as Jay himself, and certainly as beloved," adding, "Alice seamlessly became part of the unique fabric of the Chez Jay's story, often covered in the press as the real heart and soul behind the place."¹¹ Michael Anderson, who had been in the restaurant business, joined Chez Jay as its manager in 1978 when Alice began to slow down. He conducted the restaurant's business in the office at the back of the restaurant until Jay's death in 2008, when he became co-owner of Chez Jay with Jay's daughter Anita. Michael and Anita state that they are committed to preserving the interior and exterior of Chez Jay and have no plans to remodel or sell the business.¹²

During his tenure as a swinging bachelor, Jay became a noted adventurer. As a hot air balloonist, Jay was featured in print advertisements, on television, in movies, and newspaper and magazine articles.¹³ Writes Stebbins, "Through the years Jay's most notable exposure as an adventurer has undoubtedly been as the highest profile hot-air balloonist in show biz."¹⁴

⁹ And continues to this day, according to Chez Jay co-owner Michael Anderson in an email dated July 23, 2012.

¹⁰ Jon Stebbins, "It happened at Chez Jay's" unpublished manuscript.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Interview with Michael Anderson on July 11, 2012. Telephone conversation with Anita Fiondella Eck on July 6, 2012.

¹³ A print ad for Honda in the June, 1967 issue of *Outdoor Life* featured Fiondella with a Honda motorcycle strapped to his balloon. On one of Steve Allen's television specials, Jay gave Florence LaRue and Marc Gordon of the Fifth Dimension a ride 'Up, up and away' in his 'beautiful balloon.'

¹⁴ Jon Stebbins, "It happened at Chez Jay's" unpublished manuscript.

Among his other adventures, Jay led a team to Greenland in 1983 in search of the ‘Lost Squadron’ of World War II warplanes that crash landed there. He found the airplanes but it took another recovery team to retrieve them in 1992. Meanwhile, Jay spent two decades building a replica of an 85-foot Spanish galleon in his backyard. An attempt to move the boat by truck to the ocean failed when it fell off the vehicle near a freeway, cracked in two, and, after several days of attempts and traffic snarls, was demolished and hauled away by California transportation authorities. Apparently, the misadventure received sustained news attention for three days and additional publicity for Jay and his restaurant. While in his 60s, Jay became a treasure hunter, finding a Liberty Ship sunk off the coast of Yemen and retrieving a cache of Saudi Arabian silver coins.¹⁵

Jay Fiondella befriended numerous sports figures who visited him at Chez Jay. Said Jay, “All the athletes used to hang out here, Sandy Koufax, Don Drysdale, Elgin Baylor, Jerry West, Jim Plunkett, Larry Bird, Wayne Gretzky, they’ve all been in here and all of them had a good time.”¹⁶ Earlier, back in 1962, Jay’s interest in sports had led him to a brief career as a boxing manager and promoter, which was cut short when Jay was supposedly banned from boxing following the loss of one of his boxers in a Las Vegas match that prompted Jay to jump into the ring, grab the microphone, and berate the referee and the decision.¹⁷

Stebbins writes that in addition to Jay’s small roles in Hollywood productions, his restaurant “eventually built its own string of TV and film credits as the setting for countless screen scenes, essentially becoming a character actor itself.”¹⁸ Another corollary to Jay’s interest in show business was his involvement with the music business where, as a producer, he was associated with a single titled “Hang On” that did not become a hit but was another of Jay’s life experiences. Indeed, in the late 1960s Jay attempted to be a theatrical producer. Although he co-produced a show titled “Go Fly a Kite” it was unsuccessful and subsequent efforts to land a television deal also ultimately failed. None of these missteps dampened Jay Fiondella’s urge to seek out new adventures and opportunities for the remainder of his life, including his role as actor and co-producer of an independent film titled “An Eye for Talent” in 1999 when he was 73 years old.

During all of this, at Chez Jay, Fiondella was a genial host to everyone who walked through the restaurant’s doors. He engaged all of his customers with equal attention whether celebrity, tourist, or local resident. This quality, perhaps more than his reputation as a renowned playboy and adventurer, made Jay a much beloved figure in Santa Monica.

Prior to Jay Fiondella’s death in 2008, his biographer Jon Stebbins summarized Jay’s life,

¹⁵ Stebbins writes, the “massive recovery effort which snared an estimated 70 million dollars worth of silver riyals from the ship’s cargo hold.”

¹⁶ Jon Stebbins, “It happened at Chez Jay’s” unpublished manuscript.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. Stebbins’ manuscript includes photographs of Jay on the set of ‘Batman: The Movie,’ ‘Mission Impossible,’ ‘Fantasy Island’ and other shows.

writing:

Even in his last years the evidence of Jay's long past was right there with him. It was in his sly and powerful little smile. It began with a quick squint of his eyes and rolled down his nose to a slight tightening and subtle freezing of the mouth. The smile projected a mischievous flash of confident energy that let you in on who he once was. This is a smile that has shared moments with the world's greatest celebrities, the world's biggest talents, the world's most beautiful women... and it generously shined just as bright for you. It's one way Jay brought you to a place that you could never go to without him. You could easily imagine how that smile once lived on the face of an eager young actor trying to get noticed in 1950s Hollywood. He used it well... to win the world over... and it worked beautifully.¹⁹

Selected newspaper articles:

Los Angeles Times, Food Section, "Splendid Dives," November 6, 2002:

"Chez Jay has drawn a lot of celebrities since it opened in 1959, and one secret is Fiondella, an actor himself, carefully protects them from fans and gawkers. If you have a camera on you, he'll throw you right out."

Los Angeles Times, Valerie J. Nelson, "Obituaries. Jay Fiondella dies at 82; flamboyant owner of Chez Jay made the restaurant a Santa Monica Landmark," November 13, 2008:

Chez Jay "became a Santa Monica landmark and something of a shrine to [Jay's] exploits as an adventurer."

Los Angeles Times, Entertainment Section, "Old Hollywood Lingers at Chez Jay," February 24, 2012:

"On a recent Sunday night, the ramshackle Chez Jay, a beachcomber bistro in Santa Monica with a legendary past, was packed." "...Chez Jay has been well-loved to the point of obsession by its local denizens. Today, Chez Jay manages to seem both classic and a little seedy... But Chez Jay, despite its history or maybe from the weight of it, is one of a dying breed. Tom Brackey, an entertainment lawyer in his mid-40s, has been going to the nautical-themed bar and restaurant since he was a teenager. 'We lost Chasen's, there's still Dan Tana's, but there aren't a lot of places left that conjure the old Hollywood.'"

¹⁹ Jon Stebbins, "It happened at Chez Jay's" unpublished manuscript.

Conclusion: Based upon the above, the property appears to meet criteria for associations with the lives of persons significant in our past as it is defined in the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. In determining whether a property is significant for its associative values under these criteria several steps are involved. First, the importance of the individual must be established. Second, the length and nature of the person's association with the property must be determined. Third, a property associated with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's productive life.

Using these guidelines, the importance of Jay Fiondella as a local personage of fame and generosity since his arrival in Santa Monica in 1952 satisfies the first criterion. Second, Jay Fiondella was associated with Chez Jay as original owner (later co-owner) and operator from its opening in 1959 until his death in 2008. Third, Chez Jay is the property most closely associated with owner/operator Jay Fiondella that best represents his long and productive life.

Statement of Architectural Significance

The subject property's commercial vernacular design, while indicative of the period (1947) with its flat roof, outward angled elevations, canopies, and curved concrete planters, does not rise to a level of significance to warrant local Landmark designation for architectural merit. As relates to the conversion of the exterior of the building's restaurant portion into a nautical theme in 1959, it, too, is insufficiently outstanding to meet Santa Monica Landmark criteria. Specifically, Chez Jay's exterior nautical theming consists of the addition of portholes, a large seashell, split front door with porthole, and an evocative mural representing sea life painted on the restaurant portion of the building's south elevation. Although exhibiting high integrity, it does not surpass the nautical theming of another restaurant in Santa Monica called the Galley on Main Street in the Ocean Park neighborhood. The Galley's exterior nautical elements include horizontal boards suggestive of a boat's outer shell that span the width of the façade, numerous portholes, two rows of wood posts lining the front, four ship's lanterns used as sconces, and a pair of barrels flanking the center entrance. Suspended above the entrance is a small dinghy piloted by a mannequin wearing a captain's hat while holding a serving tray with wine glass. A vintage neon sign shaped like a ribbon displays "The GALLEY" in period typeface. Atop the building's flat roof are additional nautical elements such as a slatted wooden barrier with roped railing, a pair of curved ship's ventilation tubes, and a tall roped mast with nautical flags. While mindful of the rarity of mid-century nautically themed restaurants in the City (there appear to be only two, including the subject property), if one iconic example was chosen to represent the style in Santa Monica, it would be the Galley.

Restaurant portion compared with motel wing: A clear delineation exists between the restaurant portion of the subject building and the motel wing. As described above, the restaurant portion with its commercial vernacular design is differentiated from the rear

motel wing by a change in roof height and access (steps lead from the back of the restaurant up to the motel wing). Were a decision made to retain the restaurant portion while removing the motel wing, it does not appear that there would be a significant loss of physical integrity to the remaining restaurant building to suggest that the property had lost historic significance, especially considering that integrity of location, feeling and association would also be retained. Further, given that the property's significance appears to lie in its association with Jay Fiondella and the five decade history of the bar/restaurant as a retreat for locals, tourists and numerous celebrities, the removal of the rear motel wing would not lead to a diminishment of such significance.

Interior significance: Unlike many other designated Landmark properties in Santa Monica, the historical importance of Chez Jay is in large part derived from its interior where the restaurant's noteworthy social interactions took place. Specifically, the existence and arrangement of banquettes, tables, bar, sawdust covered floor, nautical decoration, mementos, framed ephemera and the singular importance of Table 10 are integral to the property's reputation and significance as the post from which Jay Fiondella held court and where its mixture of facts, myths and legends originated. As such, the loss of some or a majority of its contents, decorations, and ephemera, as well as a change in the design and/or use of Table 10, would eradicate key elements of the property's significance such that it would no longer meet Santa Monica Landmark criteria related to historic personages and associations.

Statement of Other Significance

The subject property is significant for its distinction since 1959 as a storied and familiar nautically-themed Santa Monica bar/restaurant situated on a prominent stretch of Ocean Avenue adjacent to the Civic Center not far from the Santa Monica Pier.

Is the structure representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent?

The subject property is an example of a nautically themed restaurant in Santa Monica with a high level of integrity. However, another prominent Santa Monica restaurant sharing the nautical theme is the Galley restaurant in Ocean Park. Despite appearing to be the only two nautically themed restaurants from the mid-century remaining in the City, it appears that the Galley is the property most representative of a style that is no longer prevalent in Santa Monica.

Does the structure contribute to a potential historic district?

The subject property does not appear to be a contributor to a potential historic district in Santa Monica.

CONCLUSION

The restaurant portion of the subject property known as Chez Jay qualifies as a Santa Monica Landmark based upon its historic association with Jay Fiondella: sometime actor,

playboy, balloonist, yachtsman, treasure hunter, restaurateur, and longtime friend to the ordinary and famous; for being a well-documented celebrity hangout for five decades; and, since 1959, for its distinction as a storied and familiar nautically-themed Santa Monica bar/restaurant situated on a prominent stretch of Ocean Avenue adjacent to the Civic Center not far from the Santa Monica Pier.

In summary, based on current research and the above assessment, the restaurant portion of the subject property located at 1657 Ocean Avenue appears to meet three of the City of Santa Monica's Landmark Criteria. The property was evaluated according to statutory criteria as follows:

Landmark Criteria:

9.36.100(a)(1) It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.

The subject property satisfies this criterion as a symbol and manifestation of the cultural and social history of Santa Monica. Since 1959, Chez Jay has been variously known as a hangout of celebrities, a refuge for down-and-out and struggling artists, a bar/restaurant that welcomes ordinary residents and tourists lacking rank or distinction, and the place where famed adventurer Jay Fiondella could be found serving as bartender, host, confidant, and friend to people from all walks of life. With its singular location on a prominent stretch of Ocean Avenue adjacent to the Civic Center not far from the Santa Monica Pier, Chez Jay continues to symbolize and manifest aspects of Santa Monica's cultural history as informal beach community, refuge for artists and celebrities, and magnet for adventurous spirits that – combined in one modest property – can be found nowhere else in the City.

9.36.100(a)(2) It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.

Although a fine example of themed design, its nautical elements were applied a decade after the building's construction and are purposely informal and idiosyncratic, not attempting to achieve a high level of aesthetic or artistic interest or value. Therefore, the subject property does not satisfy this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(3) It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.

From 1959 until 2008 when he died, Jay Fiondella was intimately identified with the bar/restaurant bearing his name. As a highly regarded raconteur, adventurer, playboy, restaurateur and friend of numerous celebrities from a wide variety of professions, Jay Fiondella was a local Santa Monica celebrity in his own right. His exploits were well documented in local and national media (newspapers, magazines, television) during the almost 50 years of his association with Chez Jay. Therefore, the subject property meets this criterion with a period of significance spanning the years 1959-2008.

9.36.100(a)(4) It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.

The subject property exhibits typical elements of a vernacular restaurant building from the late 1940s. Its period vernacular elements include its flat roof with canopy, portion of the west and south elevations that angle outward from the edge of the overhang, plate glass windows (since covered with horizontal boards), and low concrete planters with curved corners. Its later conversion into a nautically themed bar/restaurant is represented by portholes, murals, giant clamshell, and split door with round center window. Interior decorations further emphasize the nautical theme. Although the property's original commercial vernacular style is not architecturally distinctive, the restaurant portion of the building represents an uncommon example of nautical theming as applied to a conventional café in Santa Monica. However, the Galley, another similarly themed restaurant located in the City's Ocean Park neighborhood, is more successful in its attempt to suggest the nautical theme in its exterior decorations. While appearing to be the one of only two nautically themed restaurants from the mid-century remaining in the City, the subject property does not represent the best example of a rare architectural design valuable to a study of themed mid-century architecture in Santa Monica. That distinction appears to belong to the Galley. Therefore, the subject property does not meet this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(5) It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.

The subject property does not appear to be the work of a notable architect or builder. Current research did not identify architects Britton S. Shriver or L. Harris as prominent members of their profession to justify designation under this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.

Despite its diminutive size, Chez Jay is a long-established and familiar bar/restaurant in the City situated on a busy stretch of Ocean Avenue adjacent to the Civic Center and RAND Corporation not far from the Santa Monica Pier. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

CITY DIRECTORY RESEARCH
1657 Ocean Avenue

Year	Entry
1952-1953	Dawn Café and motel
1954	Dawn Café and motel
1958-1959	Dawn Café and motel
1960-1961	Chez Jay, Dawn Motel

APPENDIX

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INTERVIEWS

July 6, 2012. Anita Fiondella Eck, co-owner of Chez Jay (and Jay Fiondella's daughter).
Telephone conversation.

July 11, 2012. Michael Anderson, co-owner of Chez Jay. On site interview.

PHOTOGRAPHS



South elevation, looking north.



West elevation, looking northeast.



South elevation, looking northwest.



South elevation, looking north. Restaurant portion ends where recessed motel begins at right.



West elevation, looking southeast.



North and west elevations, looking southeast. Restaurant portion ends where stepped down roof begins.



North elevation (former motel wing), looking southwest. Former motel portion ends where stepped up restaurant begins.



South and east elevations (former motel wing), looking northwest.



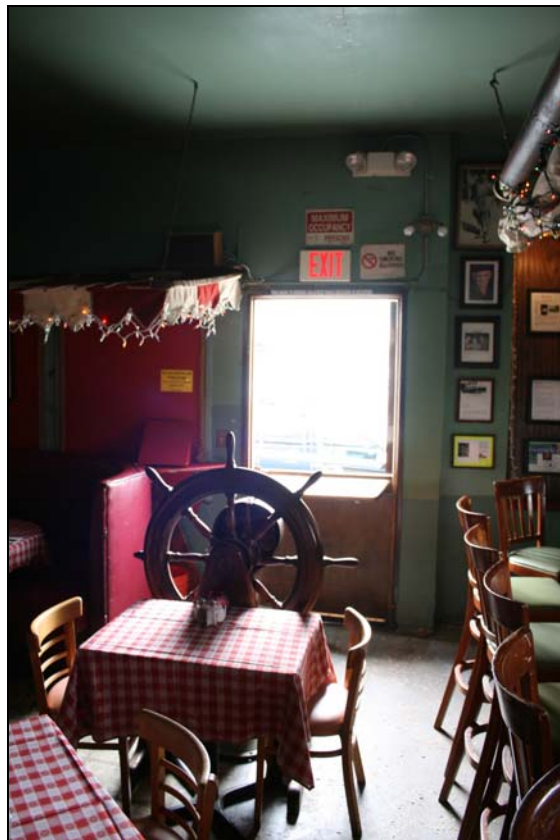
Original "Chez Jay" neon sign.



Original "Cocktails" plastic backlit sign.



Interior, looking towards rear from front door.



Interior and front entrance.



Bar.



Back of bar.



Rear of restaurant looking towards cutout opening of table 10. Restaurant portion ends through the corridor on left at back wall (with attached photos). Corridor also contains entrance to table 10.



Table 10 with porthole detail and mirror (on left).



Table 10 looking towards corridor entry and cutout opening. Curtain hooks at door header remain.



Detail.



Context view, looking south from Ocean Avenue. Subject property is on the left.



Context view, looking north from Ocean Avenue. Subject property is at the center right.