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## WRITINGS

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### Sweetzer Flats

BY JOHN TROSKO

LOS ANGELES FOLKLORE TELLS that everyone, at one time or another, has lived (or at least known someone who has lived) “off Sweetzer.” There in West Hollywood near the new City Hall, beautiful 1930s-era three-story apartment buildings and bungalows house entertainment creatives, interior designers, fashionistas, and artists. More than 38,000 people, the second largest concentration of people outside of Manhattan, live in this 1.9-square-mile city.

Come Saturdays and Sundays, the street is a hurried (and not-so-organized) orchestration of moving vans, double-parked cars, orange parking cones, tape guns, packing blankets, and wardrobe boxes as well as front lawn tag sales—all sorts of Angelenos moving in or moving out while moving up or down our social ladders.

In the early '90s, I too lived off Sweetzer, albeit above it on Marmont Lane, in a small ranch house built by a writer from the TV series *Gunsmoke*. My lovely neighborhood just above the then-unrenovated Chateau Marmont was full of older homeowners who liked to complain that they were “land rich and cash poor.”

Many nights after visiting the brand-new Sunset 8000, I'd walk up the hill to the house from Sunset Boulevard, noting that our small canyon most always yielded a warm breeze. I'd pass the tall hedges that hid the garden above the Chateau Marmont garage and head toward home. I'd eavesdrop on the indistinguishable conversations of the bus boys in the restaurant's back kitchen, the din of banging pots and clanging silverware overlapping with their laughter.

One late night, as I walked past the garage and rounded the corner, I literally bumped into actor Christopher Walken. Pale and friendly, he walked from the open gate to a car parked in the red. I honestly didn't think much about it—it was dark and late. But a few months later, I was reading *Vanity Fair*. Among the pages was a picture of him, sitting in a chair by the window in a room of the Chateau Marmont hotel. He'd been photographed by Annie Liebowitz—I bet she took that photo the evening I bumped into him. I felt like part of history.

My introduction to Hollywood had begun.

But soon I did what everyone does when they live off Sweetzer—I moved on . . . and up.