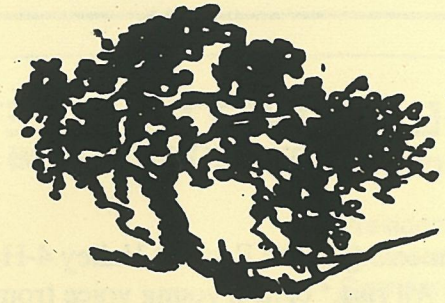


BENNETT VALLEY VOICE



BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 17 NUMBER ONE

FEBRUARY, 1994

MARRING THE WINDOW TO THE UNIVERSE

LIGHT POLLUTION

BY TIMOTHY FERRIS

In addition to the many conspicuous virtues of living in Bennett Valley--the sweeping mountain views, abundant wildlife, the clean, bracing air, and the peace and quiet of country life--we are blessed with another important resource, less often talked about but no less valuable: the sight of dark night skies filled with stars.

As recently as a generation or so ago, most Americans grew up in places where they could go out on a moonless night and see the four thousand or so stars normally visible to the naked eye. Parents taught their children to recognize Cygnus the swan and Orion the hunter, constellations that date back to the days of the ancient Greeks.

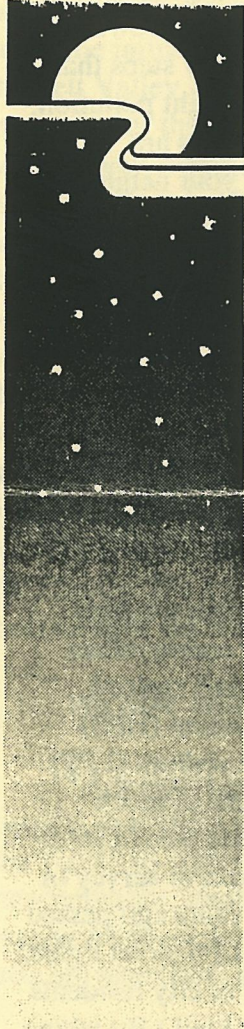
Today, as civic and commercial electric lighting has spread across the continent, many children--and often their parents--have never been privy to the thrilling sight of a genuinely dark night. When they look up at night they see a milky-grey scrim, through which can be perceived only a few dozen stars. Lost to them is excitement of a direct encounter

with nature on a grand scale, and also an important sense of historical continuity: After all, it was knowledge of the stars that oriented Odysseus as he navigated the Mediterranean, guided the Magi in search of the infant Jesus, and led escaped slaves on their way north to freedom.

Responsible for this loss is what astronomers call "light pollution." In a quest to better illuminate streets, sidewalks, and parking lots, many municipalities have inadvertently installed lights that also shine upward, blotting out the stars. It is estimated that Americans waste \$1 billion worth of electricity a year illuminating the bellies of airplanes and birds.

Light pollution has already taken a toll in Bennett Valley. At Rocky Hill Observatory off Enterprise Road, where an 18-inch reflecting telescope is used to search for exploding stars in distant galaxies, we estimate that about a third of the naturally visible stars are blotted out by the glare coming from Santa Rosa and other neighboring communities. Near the zenith the sky remains dark enough that we can investigate galaxies and quasars up to a

see next page



THE BENNETT VALLEY 4-H CLUB

BY CRISSI MCLERRAN

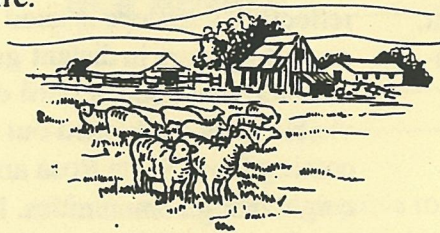
"The meeting of the Bennett Valley 4-H club will come to order. All rise," calls a young voice from the front of the room. Kids, whose ages range from nine to eighteen, rise as two flags pass by, the American flag and the 4-H flag. After saying the pledge of allegiance, all are seated and the meeting begins.

The Bennett Valley 4-H Club was established in 1946. The general meetings are always held on the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM. They are held at the Bennett Valley Grange, the oldest standing grange in the United States. The club is run by its members while the adults stand back.

Besides general meetings, 4-H members are involved in different 4-H projects and committees. The projects consist of Woodworking, Breads, Rabbits, Dogs, etc. Adults usually run these projects, but there's usually a teen who acts as the junior leader. Some projects are even run by teens.

Committees are always run by the members while the adults stand by to help if they're needed. One of Bennett Valley 4-H club's main committees is REDGA (Redwood Empire Dairy Goat Association). REDGA is a goat show in which the club mans a food booth for the contestants, judges, or anyone else who drops by. The members cook the food, work at the order window, and help in any other area of the booth that might need help.

4-H teaches a lot about responsibility and leadership. With 4-H, members can grow up to be important business leaders, or anything else they choose to be. Bennett Valley 4-H always tries to be successful in teaching leadership to all of its members. We encourage people outside of 4-H to learn more about 4-H by joining. It's truly an experience that will be with you for the rest of your life.



Crissi is sixteen years old, and is in the 10th grade at Montgomery High School. She has been in the 4-H for seven years, and is the reporter for the Bennett Valley Club.

LIGHT POLLUTION.....*from front page*

billion light years away. But our community is growing, and each year there are a few more lights in the Valley, like a twinkling reflection of the real constellations above.

If we are to preserve our night skies, we need to keep light pollution under control in the Valley, while encouraging our neighbors to do the same. Homeowners can help by taking a few easy steps that also save money. To fight light pollution, make sure your exterior lights are shielded. Ideally none of your neighbors--even those across the Valley--should be in the line of sight of a bare bulb. Avoid the use of glaring "security" floodlights that stay on all night. Law enforcement officers advise that much better security is provided by lights equipped with motion sensors. These come on suddenly, startling intruders, and they can pay for themselves by cutting your monthly electric bill.

On the municipal level, great progress would be made if nearby communities shaded their street lights and replaced obsolete high-pressure sodium (HPS) globes with low-pressure sodium (LPS) ones. LPS lights use a third as much electricity as HPS, and they have a pleasing, sun-yellow hue. (A recent survey in Tucson, Arizona, which years ago passed an ordinance mandating LPS street lights, revealed that 88 per cent of city residents preferred them to the old kind.) By taking just these few simple, cost-saving precautions, we can help insure that our children and their children will continue to benefit from the Valley's priceless window on the wider universe.

Timothy Ferris is the author of six books on astronomy. For more information about light pollution, write the International Dark Sky Association, 3545 North Stewart, Tucson AZ 85716

UPDATE

BENNETT VALLEY GOLF COURSE

BY ROGER CREER

After many years of rumors, the city of Santa Rosa has publically taken the lead with interested parties in the proposed development of an additional eighteen hole golf course protruding into Bennett Valley.

There are many issues and ramifications concerning this project. Some are confined specifically to the golf course and others have implications beyond its physical limit. (see *B.V. Voice*, July'92 & Feb.'93) Regardless, all of the statute procedures and the limitations of current ordinances must be followed, and there may be hurdles which in and of themselves are enough to halt the course. As in most public issues, there is both support and opposition within the membership of our community.

Early in November, Mr. Chuck Rust, Director of Santa Rosa Park and Recreation, met with our homeowners' association as well as with other groups, and presented to them rather detailed maps and proposals. At the Bennett Valley meeting, many in attendance were surprised at how far the process had progressed without any input from the valley.

Separate from the issues alluded to above, several of us felt if in fact the golf course was to be built, it was important to participate in the process to ameliorate

the most objectional elements. Could it be a win-win? Supervisor Mike Cale has played a very important role and given a considerable amount of time in meeting with the various interests, and has served as a conduit for the concerns we wanted voiced and implemented into the proposal.

To date, three of our most important objections have been conceded. They are: (1) The size of the course will be reduced by more than twenty acres and will not intrude beyond the Mantanzas Creek Bridge. The slopes behind the current homes will be included, but there will not be frontage along the road. (No camel's nose inside the tent.) (2) There will not be any additional entrance on Bennett Valley Road, and any access will be through the current golf course entrance. (3) The land on which it is built will remain in the county with a mechanism to ensure its non-development status. In addition, the current plan will not provide any housing.

At this time it is hard to even second guess what may finally happen, but Santa Rosa is aggressively moving the process along. For now, one of the most important challenges is to keep informed and participate in the dialogue. No surprises!

EARTH LITERACY

Wetlands are the most biologically diverse and rich habitats on the planet. Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior notes, "in order to preserve biodiversity, we must restructure the rights of private landowners to ensure these areas are protected." Babbitt believes the question comes down to human needs versus wildlife habitat. "The human species must accept the responsibility to make space for the rest of creation to play its assigned role, he says.

Many of us live lives of rampant consumerism, which produce excessive waste and use natural resources with abandon. A new philosophy called "Earth Literacy" maintains people shouldn't dominate nature, but are a component of nature. We must align ourselves with the natural world by realizing, just as the Native Americans did, that when we harm nature, we harm ourselves. We must think more broadly on how to preserve space on this planet. Babbitt says, "Can humankind live lightly on the Earth? I believe we have the vision and the courage to accomplish this."

BENNETT VALLEY DESIGN REVIEW

BY TAMARA BOULTBEE

One of the primary features of the 1979 Bennett Valley Specific Plan (now referred to as the Bennett Valley Area Plan) was the creation of a design review element and a design review committee. The purpose of the committee was (and is) to ensure that the goals and policies of the Bennett Valley Plan were (are) implemented to the maximum extent possible. The impetus for the creation of this body was the desire of the community to mitigate the visual impact of future required development and to preserve the unique aesthetic qualities of Bennett Valley.

A recurring theme throughout the study is the importance of the visual amenities within Bennett Valley. To this end, it was recognized that open vistas should be protected and preserved, that structures shall blend with the landscape and be hidden from view as much as possible, and that scenic/visual corridors, riparian corridors, skylines, and ridgelines shall be protected and preserved. In these areas, building is excluded.

In addition to making determinations regarding proposed site use adequacy and consistency, traffic, neighborhoods, etc., the Design Review Committee works with additional specific standards including but not limited to siting and size of structure, materials and colors, landscaping, undergrounding of utilities, etc. Five to six areas of information need to be included in the site plan presentation. Design Review applies to all new structures (dwelling or other buildings) as well as remodels, renovations, and additions.

In the interest of meeting the goal of having all structures blend into the natural surroundings, and to preserve the natural appearance of rural Bennett Valley which is so valued, owners of existing structures, when repainting or reroofing, are strongly encouraged to meet the guidelines by repainting structures in earthtones that blend with each particular site, and by reroofing in dark colors. As a general rule of thumb, it should be remembered that light colors, especially "en masse" tend to be highly reflective and appear much lighter and more reflective when seen in an outdoor setting.

The next issue of the Voice will provide more indepth information on specific requirements of Design review and the process.

P . L . U . M . B .

PLANNING/LAND USE MESSAGE BOARD

There has been little activity in applications for zoning and land use changes, with the exception of the following:

1. Dr. Bob Gardner--Bennett Valley Road, west of Bennett Ridge. At the request of PRAC, the Gardners modified the shape and alignment of the four lots in the proposed subdivision. The change involved the northeastern most parcel which was relocated to the southwest. Siting for the building envelope was agreed upon at a field inspection with the applicants, a Planning Department representative, and BVHA representatives. Ruling by PRAC: Conditional approval.

THE GRANGE WILL BE HOSTING TWO
EVENTS IN THE COMING MONTHS:

RUMMAGE SALE

FRIDAY MARCH 25TH

9:00 AM TO 4:30 PM

ITEMS TO SELL ARE WELCOMED-CALL 544-8044

SPAGHETTI FEED

SATURDAY, APRIL 30TH

5:30 PM TO 8:00 PM

COME TO THE ALWAYS DELICIOUS SPAGHETTI FEED
PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT THE GRANGE CHARITIES.



MEMO FROM THE BOARD

Each New Year presents new ideas and challenges, and our 1994 wish is that we will bring to the Valley a new era of increased local control over the protection of our beautiful natural resources. The B.V.H.A., the Design Review Committee, Supervisor Mike Cale, and County Planning staff Nick Chase and Greg Carr are in the initial stages of creating a new entity (The Bennett Valley Advisory Board) which would be an expansion of the present Design Review Committee, whose seven members would make up the initial new Advisory Board. All Bennett Valley development projects would first be reviewed by this Board and then recommendations would go to the County where permits would be issued. This process would be an advantage to the applicant because the restrictions of the Bennett Valley Area Plan would be known in the early stages before much time and money have been invested. Mike Cale has been very supportive of giving a greater voice to the community, so we are looking forward to a new cooperative partnership with the County. We will be able to be more specific by the next issue of the Voice.

We have other plans brewing too:

*A welcoming committee and community booklet to explain the history and present activities of the Valley to newly arrived residents. If you have a new neighbor, please let us know. Also, we are looking for someone to assist with this committee, so if you are interested, please call our Hotline #528-9645.

*Geoff Hornsby, B.V.H.A. Board member is working on a system whereby Realtors would inform prospective clients of the restrictions of the Bennett Valley Area Plan thereby diminishing future upsets when a new resident comes up against some Guide Lines of which he/she was unawares.

All this and it is still only February, so don't miss out on the upcoming action. Please join or renew your membership for 1994. Your support is greatly appreciated.

B.V.H.A. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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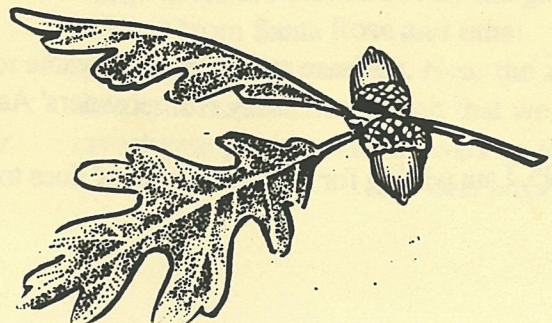
BOARD TRANSITIONS

Our sincere appreciation goes to Bill Wright for his many years of service on the Board, three of them as President. Bill has been a dedicated and assiduous champion for the preservation of the Valley and we are sorry that he chose not to seek reelection. However, he will remain active on the B.V. Fire Board.

Regrettably, we have accepted Michael Bates' resignation after almost three terms on the Board. Michael, with his exceptional knowledge and sensitivity to natural beauty, always brought a special eloquent dimension to all of our deliberations. Fortunately, as with Bill, he will be available to us when needed. Thank you Bill and Michael, you will be hard men to replace.

We want to welcome our two newly elected members, Eve Boling and Marge Simon. Eve will be the new Editor of the Voice, and Marge will serve as our Legal-Eagle researcher.

The Board meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month, 7:30 PM at the Fire Station. Your attendance and participation are always welcome.



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BENNETT
VALLEY
VOICE

MEMBERSHIP DUES

This is the time of year that we ask you to renew your membership or become a new member. Dues are still \$7.00 per household, but in 1995, we are hoping that you will vote for an increase to \$10.00. For the past few years, our revenue from the dues has equaled our output so that we have not been able to build up our reserves. We view these reserves as our defense fund to be held for emergency uses i.e. land-use consultants or attorneys. Therefore, please fill out the form below when you join or renew your membership. We have appreciated your support in the past and thank you for continuing it.

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION 1994
MEMBERSHIP DUES \$7.00



Please join or renew and continue to receive our newsletter
NEW MEMBER _____ RENEWAL _____

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____

Please make checks payable to: B.V.H.A. and return in enclosed envelope
Bennett Valley Homeowners' Association, P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405

In 1995, I am willing for the Homeowners' dues to be \$10.00. YES _____ NO _____