



---

# BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION - VOLUME 18 NUMBER ONE - JANUARY, 1995

---

## THANKS PG&E FOR HEARING US

The large number of power outages experienced by Bennett Valley residents in November and December triggered several events. The first was the well publicized community meeting on December 8th, where 50 local residents unloaded their frustrations on two PG&E officials. The second was a flurry of activity by PG&E crews to upgrade the parts of our distribution system that seemed most vulnerable; the most visible effort was the reframing of a mile of poles on Bennett Valley Road near Woodside.

The third was the realization by the BVHA that the high rate and duration of power outages has been a long term problem, and that resolving this problem will take a long term effort. Therefore, a standing PG&E sub-committee has been formed whose charter is to work with PG&E engineers until the reliability of our electrical service meets appropriate standards.

The committee consists of long time residents, Don Wolf and Bruce Jones, both retired electrical engineers who have worked diligently over this past month meeting with the PG&E engineering staff, talking to maintenance personnel and reviewing outage data for the last ten years. Don and Bruce, because of their life time electrical engineering knowledge, now have an understanding of the Bennett Valley distribution system: its history, its weaknesses, and the opportunities for improvement. They intend to continue meeting on a regular basis and serve as a two way information channel between the community and PG&E.

A review of the outage history shows that birds have been the major problem, followed by equipment failure, and then trees or tree branches. The long duration outages have been exacerbated by the inability to switch our circuit to other sources. These are technical problems that have solutions.

The community meeting was successful.....PG&E got the message, and we're convinced that they really intend to improve our system. In the last month, PG&E has reframed 34 spans, and installed 15 branch fuses (with 32 more to be installed.) The fuses will not reduce the number of outages, but will significantly reduce the number of households affected. More importantly existing weak points will be pinpointed and can be upgraded.

In the next few months, PG&E will implement several other projects. Some of this work may involve planned outages between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM on weekdays. Please accept these in good humor, since planned outages surely beat unplanned ones.

With the additional fuses, future outages are going to affect smaller numbers of households, so it is important that you report any outage and not assume that PG&E already knows about it. The number to call is 1-800-743-5000. If you have information (you saw damage, observed a flash, or heard a fuse blow that sounds like a shotgun) call the Bennett Hotline 579-6300 *after* you've called the 800 number. The Bennett Valley Hotline is an answering machine, and will be checked by service personnel when they have been informed that there's a problem in our area.

Thank you PG&E for hearing us, and special thanks to Don and Bruce for picking up the ball and running with it. Their presence and expertise is a sure guarantee that "light-wise" we will have a brighter future.



---

---

# THIS COULD HAVE BEEN YOUR NEIGHBOR

## Operation of Spanish Language Center and Short Term Rental Violated the Tenets of Bennett Valley Area Plan

In 1993, Ronda Calef of San Francisco bought a three bedroom single family residence at 4700 Peracca Road, and converted it into a seven bedroom "retreat center" without obtaining the proper permits. For the past 17 months, she has conducted this commercial operation in spite of numerous warnings from the Sonoma County Zoning Enforcement Division and protests from Bennett Valley residents and the B.V.H.A. Board.

Patrons paid \$375 per weekend to learn Spanish, share cultural festivities such as dancing, singing, and altar building. On the weekends when there were no classes held, private groups were solicited to rent the residence for \$350 a day for weddings and other events. For example, in June a college graduation was held there with 150 attendees with about sixty cars and the use of microphones and loudspeakers. In August, this home was rented out for a wedding party that lasted three days. Such an operation violates current zoning ordinances, building codes, septic disposal regulations, health department rules, business licensing, and taxing authorities.

The following are excerpts from a letter to Supervisor Mike Cale written by concerned neighboring property owners.

*December 13, 1994*

*Dear Supervisor Cale,*

*We wish to express our appreciation for your support in seeing that Ronda Calef be required to comply with the Sonoma County Zoning Regulations. It has been a particularly vexing problem for us to see Ms. Calef continue illegal commercial operations which began in August, 1993 and have continued through December, 1994.*

*The previous character of this property has been one of a family residence. This characterization ended abruptly with the emergence of "Casa Felicitades."*

*We know that you have recently been presented with a series of letters from local and Bay Area Spanish immersion class participants supporting the pro-*

*gram. I am including a copy of the letter from Ms. Calef initiating this letter campaign. Ms. Calef, among other distortions, not only misrepresents that she is entitled to operate, although out of compliance, but introduces inflammatory rhetoric falsely implying that Bennett Valley's opposition to her illegal activity holds "elitist and racist" overtones.....Sincerely, John and Teresa Votruba*

Accusations of "racism and elitism" is a stratagem for hiding the truth that Ms. Calef has been illegally operating a business (without permits) for over a year. The value of a much needed Spanish emergence program is unquestionable, but community service is not what is at issue here. It is the position of the B.V.H.A. that a commercial operation such as "Casa Felicitades" is in violation of the Sonoma County Zoning Code and the Bennett Valley Area Plan, and is, therefore, incompatible with the rural residential character of the Valley.

We are thankful to the County for finally resolving these issues. The following letter, addressed to Jean Kapolchok, private Planning Consultant hired by Ms. Calef, addresses the request for clarification regarding week-end rentals.

*January 25, 1995*

*Dear Ms. Kapolchok:*

*...A single family dwelling may be rented out as a household residence on a less than thirty day basis, as a single unit only. If rooms are rented out on an individual basis, the rentals must comply with all code requirements for roomers or boarders or for bed and breakfast inns. In the Rural Residential Zoning District, roomers or boarders are permitted within the definition of "family", however, bed and breakfast inns are not permitted.*

*A "household residence" shall be for residential use only and shall not include group classes, educational classes or any type of group training, retreats, weddings, or any event that meets the definition of a*

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## SHERIFF MARK IHDE MEETS WITH BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS

On November 1, 1994, we were treated to a dialogue with Sheriff Mark Idhe and several Special Enforcement Crime Prevention Officers. Those of us who were in attendance, came away with the comforting sense that we were in good hands under the leadership of these committed and competent men and women.

Sheriff Idhe's message was that his Department's ability to provide high quality, professional law enforcement services is dependent upon our community involvement as additional eyes and ears. We must never hesitate to immediately report any suspicious incidents for their investigation. His willingness to be available to the community and to listen and respond to our concerns was most reassuring.

Crime Prevention Packets, which included pamphlets on "How to Protect Your Home", "Personal Security", "Vehicle Security", and "Neighborhood Watch Programs" were passed out. Pamphlets are available by calling the Crime Prevention Center at 527-3107.

### Important Phone Numbers:

Any Emergency.....9-1-1  
 Life threatening crime in progress, fire, ambulance  
 Dispatch (Non-Emergency).....527-2121  
 Deputy response, suspicious vehicles, persons trespassing  
 Business Line (Non-Emergency).....527-2650  
 Patrol requests, misdemeanor, no suspect known reports



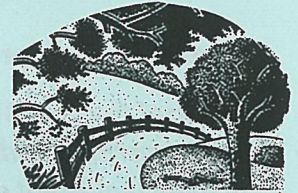
### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lois Brown	President
Roger Creer	Vice-President
Marge Simon	Secretary
Sharon Delaney	Treasurer
Eve Boling	Voice Editor
Bill Sullivan	Jerry Toso
Geoff Hornsby	Marilyn Stocks

"Voice" articles contributed by Bruce Jones, Greg Martin, and John and Terry Votruba.

## VALLEY VIEWS

*tids and bits of information*



### Bennett Valley Preservation Fund

This is a newly established fund which is separate from our membership account. It will be used exclusively to insure that any development project complies with all of the recommendations and mitigation measures placed upon it by the County. Often after permits are issued, rules and regulations are flagrantly disregarded, and the County does not have the resources to follow up. Such a fund would give the B.V.H.A. more clout in dealing with out-of-compliance. If you would like to contribute to this Fund, please make check payable to B.V.P. Fund.

We want to thankfully acknowledge our first big donor, The Bennett Valley Township Incorporation Committee (BVTIC). In their last newsletter, they stated that because a Township was not financially feasible at this time, they are closing their bank account and donating the surplus to our new B.V.P. Fund. BVTIC should be congratulated for their efforts in trying to establish a Township. It was a worthy dream that merited the time and effort put forth by a few dedicated individuals. We owe them our deep gratitude.

You may have received a recent letter from Roy Gustavson. Roy resigned from the now dissolved BVTIC Committee and has started a new group called the Bennett Valley Incorporation Committee. From BVTAC to BVTIC and now BVIC has caused some understandable confusion. If you want clarification, you may call #578-0708.

### GOLF COURSE UP-DATE

On 11/29/94, the Santa Rosa City Council voted to purchase a two-year \$450,000 option on the 3.5 million, 126 acres that are proposed for the new Golf Course adjacent to the existing Bennett Valley Golf Course. Before the course can be developed, the city must complete an environmental impact report. Know that we will be scrutinizing this report, and will continue to keep you appraised of each new development on this project.

continued from previous page

Cultural Event". "Weedend en Espanol", which previously operated at this location, is an example of an activity that is not considered to be a residential use. It is a use that, in the least, would require a use permit to operate from the subject property.

Rental as a household residence does not authorize the rental of a single family dwelling for any activity that would otherwise require a use permit or any use that is not permitted in the zoning district in which the property is located.....Sincerely, Debra Watts, Code Enforcement Manager

We are pleased with the county's position on single family rentals. Our hope is that "less than thirty day basis" will not become problematic. Only time will allow a proper assessment.



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

## DONATION TO THE FIRE DEPT.

The Fire Station has served as our community meeting center for many years, and we have found two useful ways to show our gratitude.

### An Emergency Information Hotline

During emergencies, such as fires, storms, power outages, the Fire Department is inundated with calls for information for which they have little time to respond. Therefore, we are helping the Chief install a separate Emergency Information Hotline that will give you updated information about road hazards, off limit areas, etc. You will hear the Chief's voice giving instructions, but you will not be able to leave a message.

For Emergency Reporting use #911.

Unfortunately, Pacific Bell is behind schedule, but we will relay the new Hotline # to you as soon as it is available to us.

### New Chairs

There is never enough seating for large gatherings, so we are helping with the purchase of more chairs.

If you have any sofas that you are replacing, the staff will gladly provide pick-up. The firefighters can always use additional comfy seating. To donate a sofa call #578-7761 .

Please detach form at dotted line

## **BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION**

### Membership Dues 1995

Join, or renew your membership for 1995. Annual dues are \$10.00

Please support your Homeowners' Association and continue to receive the "Voice"

New Member

Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to B.V.H.A. Please use enclosed envelope

**Thank you for your support !**

## MEMO FROM THE BOARD MEMBERSHIP

This is our membership issue when we encourage all residents to join the association and our loyal members to renew. You will remember that last year at this time, we had a survey to determine if there would be a consensus for raising our dues from \$7.00 to \$10.00. The survey indicated that 90% of you were willing to raise dues. However, for those of you who did not agree with a dues raise, feel free to pay just the old dues. Thank you for supporting our efforts.

### BOARD TRANSITION

There have been several changes on the board as indicated in our directory. We extend a warm welcome to Roger Creer, Sharon Delaney, and Marilyn Stocks. All three new board members have a strong commitment to do the work that is continuously challenging us to preserve the Valley.

We bid farewell to two very special people: Tamara Boulton and Sam Dakin. The Valley would not have remained as beautiful as it is today were it not for Tammy's single-handed devotion and tenacity. She was one of the original members of the citizen's group that created the Bennett Valley Specific Plan. She has assiduously served on the Board for eighteen years, researching and educating the Community and the County regarding the necessity of following the tenets of the Specific Plan. Tammy is serving on the Design Review Committee so that we can all still benefit from her important presence.

We are equally saddened by Sam's departure as Treasurer. For almost two terms, Sam brought his integrity, generosity, optimism, and business wisdom to all of our activities. He loves Bennett Valley with a passion, and has promised to return to the Board someday when his family is older and he has fewer outside commitments. We are indebted and grateful to both Tammy and Sam, and we thank them deeply.

### DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE OPENING

Anyone interested in serving on this valuable committee should submit an application to Supervisor Mike Cale, 575 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. For more information, call Chairman Chet Adamach at #527-6007.

## CHIEF'S REPORT



### BENNETT VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT

The first 2 weeks of 1995 have kept the fire department on its toes. In the first 14 days of Jan. fire department personnel and volunteers were paged for service 19 times. Several additional public-assist-type calls were taken through our business line and handled by personnel staffing the fire station. The majority of incidents were storm and flood related. Fire personnel and equipment cleared downed trees, downed power lines, mud slides, vehicle accidents, traffic control, placed warning signs etc., in an effort to keep roads open and warn the public.

The following is a summary of some of the more significant incidents. Bennett Valley Rd. was closed at the 6500 block for about 7 hours due to a power pole and 12 kv lines that fell across both lanes. Sonoma Mt. Rd. had several mud slides partially blocking the road in various locations. In the 2100 block of Crane Canyon Rd., a large tree fell blocking both lanes and an unsuspecting motorist drove into the branches; firefighters cleared the road in less than an hour. Minor flooding occurred mainly on low-lying properties with poor drainage, and on roads with clogged culverts. Bennett Valley Rd. between Walker's Pond and Bennett Ridge Rd. sustained heavy runoff with lots of debris in the road. Grange Bridge at Bennett Valley Rd. was closed until structural damage caused by flood waters could be repaired. Bennett Valley firefighters assisted Glen Ellen firefighters in the rescue of a man whose truck ran off Warm Springs Rd. Jan. 14th rolling over and landing 30 feet below in the creek. As water cascaded over the top of the truck, firefighters using ropes managed a delicate rescue safely bringing the victim to the road where he was assessed and taken to the hospital for hypothermia and minor injuries.

In closing, I would like to thank all the firefighters and acknowledge the Sonoma County Road Dept., PG&E, PacBell, and the CHP for their efforts and strong showing in Bennett Valley during the recent storm activity.


MEMO FROM THE BOARD  
 MEMBERSHIP  
 The Board of Directors of the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association is pleased to announce the formation of a new committee to assist in the development of the Bennett Valley Fire Station. The committee will be composed of representatives from the Homeowners Association, the Fire Department, and the local community. The committee will be responsible for identifying potential sites, conducting feasibility studies, and coordinating the construction process. We encourage all members of the Homeowners Association to participate in this important project. Please contact the committee chair, [Name], at [Phone Number] for more information.

BULK RATE  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 SANTA ROSA, CA  
 PERMIT NO. 945

BENNETT VALLEY VOICE



BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOC.  
 P. O. Box 2666  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95405



*An Evening with*

# *Supervisor Mike Cale*

Wednesday, March 15th                      7:30 p m  
 Bennett Valley Fire Station

*Join us in a dialogue with Supervisor Cale.  
 He always welcomes the opportunity to listen to whatever  
 questions or suggestions that are on our minds.*