

BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

Bennett Valley Homeowners' Association Vol. 18 No.2 Fall 1995

GUEST EDITORIAL BY SUPERVISOR MIKE CALE

As 1995 is rapidly moving into its final quarter, it seems an appropriate time to revisit some of the issues that evolved during the last three years. It is hard to believe that time has moved so quickly, but it is necessary to remain in touch with our history to avoid mistakes, or at least reduce their impact, for the future.

When I first came into office, the most significant concern expressed by the Homeowners' Association and the Design Review Committee was a lack of communication. This seemed to emanate from a belief they were being excluded, ignored or otherwise disenfranchised from the decision-making process. Local concerns did not seem to be relevant when interpreting plans, developing conditions, or ultimately approving projects. In addition, many people were frustrated because they simply did not understand the system.

The first significant accomplishment was to protect the integrity of the Bennett Valley Specific, now Area Plan. During the General Plan Update of 1989, it had been intended that this plan, along with several of the county specific plans, would be amended and incorporated by reference into the General Plan. With the support of the B. V. Homeowners, I was

able to convince my colleagues the Plan should remain a stand alone document to effectively guide land use in Bennett Valley.

A second area of concern was the role to be played by the B.V.H.A. and the BV.D.R., and the corresponding relationship between both entities. After several meetings with representatives of both groups, it was determined that the highest level of comfort would be for the B.V.D.R. to remain focused on design guidelines, and the B.V.H.A. to interact with applicants and the County on land use issues. To ensure that the B.V.H.A. would have credibility, I had the Board of Supervisors acknowledge their existence via a Board Resolution.

Now that we had developed distinct lines of communication and areas of responsibility, one would be quick to assume (always a mistake!) that we are positioned to diffuse disaster. Alas, the infamous berm and quest for incorporation by some Valley residents.

Although we had crafted a fairly sound internal communication system, we had not closed the loop on the external. Two projects approved by the City of Santa Rosa required a spoils site for excess material. Unfortunately, a site was selected and material moved without consulting with the County.

Obviously, this situation escalated and became very divisive within the community. The issue of the berm was eventually resolved, albeit not to everyone's satisfaction, but a distant chant for incorporation continued. The thrust of consideration for such action was the premise of local control, the assumption being that a locally elected town council would be in a better position to protect the Valley and provide necessary services than a somewhat removed county government with a full plate.

The fundamental problem with the concept was it simply would not work. Available revenues continue to diminish, and the need for services escalate. State mandated housing requirements, infrastructure improvements and other urban level services would have severely jeopardized the rural integrity and prominent agriculture that are an integral part of the Valley.

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MIKE CALE....continued

Preservation of the quality of life ultimately prevailed, and a majority of the Valley residents concluded that working cooperatively with the County was a more viable alternative.

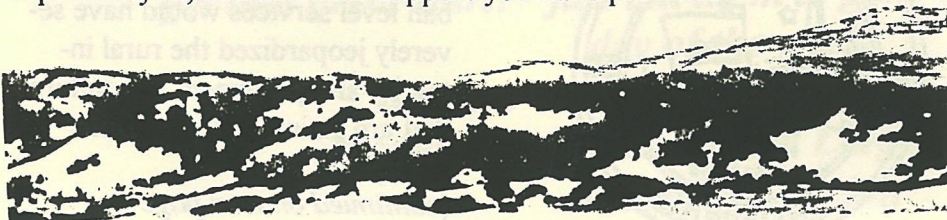
Perhaps one more notable, and continuing, saga is the expansion of the Bennett Valley Golf Course. The project has existed in one form or another for several years and, for obvious reasons, engendered a great deal of interest, if not anxiety, from the Valley residents. I have had, and continue to have, an open dialogue with Ken Blackman, representing the City. These are adjunct to the public forums sponsored by the City. At this point in time I have a commitment from the City that there will be no houses developed, and the property will not be annexed.

In addition, I have concurrence that the golf course will become part of a new community separator to be created by the County to preclude urban intrusion into the Valley. As of this writing, the City is still evaluating the financial assumptions, and has not made a definitive commitment. My goal is the community separator will far outlast elected officials and their individual agendas.

In closing, a few comments on the citizens who serve on or support the B.V.H.A. and the B.V.D.R.. These individuals give a great deal of their time and energy to protect the visual quality and land use integrity of the Valley. The Neuman project was a recent example of pro-active negotiations to allow for development that was complementary to the Valley, and securing open space easements that are dedicated in perpetuity. The lines of communication are strong, the goal is clear, and the commitment is present.

However, my history suggests that mistakes will be made. Errors in my judgment or that of any involved citizen will give rise to concern. These issues should not divide the community in the future, but become bridges to extend the levels of communication, and provide opportunities for positive conflict resolution.

Together, we have accomplished a great deal. I believe we are just beginning to experience the gratification of positive results, and will achieve much more in the future. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to represent you, and all of the support you have provided.



Valley Views

Updates on issues of concern

The Golf Course

As you read in the Press Democrat, the E.R.I. on the optioned Hunter property has turned up approximately four acres of wetlands in addition to an important Indian archeological site. These discoveries have necessitated a trip "back to the drawing board" The city has now rearranged the combined courses into 27 holes which break down into three different 9 hole courses.

Golfers will have their choice of any or all three of the courses. Seniors and beginners would probably opt for the less strenuous and flat course, while advanced golfers will find an exciting challenge in the hill-side course.

Although definitive conclusions have not as yet been drawn up, the project is in its final stages.

The good news is that the redesigned course will remain on the side of the present course and there will be no disruptive tunneling under Bennett Valley Rd.

This new plan has far less visual impact upon the Valley!!



The Grange Spaghetti Feed

Sat Oct 28, 5:30 - 8:00 pm

Adults \$5.00

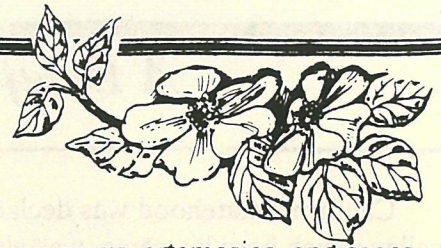
Children under 12 years \$2.50

Children under 5 years are free

Great food and great fun. Come dine with your neighbors!

GROWING NATIVE FLOWERS

by Eve Boling



As one crosses over the city limits from Santa Rosa into Bennett Valley, there is a change from an urbanized landscape to open vistas where one can see vineyards and Oak savannahs. In addition, the valley has large areas of denser chaparral, and stands of Douglas-fir, California Bays, and Redwoods.

Today many gardeners are interested in landscaping in which environment, climate, and restricted water supplies are taken into account. This makes Bennett Valley an ideal location for natural or semi-wild gardens which blend in with the surrounding plant communities. The mini-climates in Northern California support a great variety of native plants, and these grow easily where they have already acclimated. During a drought, these native plants tend to survive better than exotics. In an area with many Oaks, one must keep in mind that too much water harms these trees, and, therefore, drought-resistant natives make good companion plants.

Bennett Valley has a Mediterranean climate with dry summers and wet winters. The area has some ocean influence. There are many adaptable plants from California's foothills, coastal regions, meadows, and streamsides that would be easy to grow in most gardens here.

To get started on such a garden, one must keep in mind slope of

the land, rockiness of the location, type, number, and location of trees, amounts of light and shade, and availability of water. To decide what plants are appropriate, observe what plants grow in your yard or in this area. In addition, many excellent publications are available with information on garden designs, different plants groupings, and plant lists and their requirements. Finding a source of seeds and plants is also not difficult since Sonoma county is very fortunate to have nurseries that specialize and carry native plants and seeds. Contacting the Native Plant Society or attending their meetings or visiting wildflower shows held throughout the area is another way to research what to grow and how to go about it.

There are a few important tips to keep in mind when one is all set to plant. It is against the law to take plants from wild areas without a permit. But homeowners can transplant the native plants that grow on their own property to their garden. Plants that are to be transplanted must be kept moist and sheltered until the plant becomes established. Plants need good drainage, and soil amendments such as manures, peat moss, composted vegetation, or leaf mold are generally necessary.

Native plants can be used exclusively in one's garden, or they can be mixed with exotics of similar growing requirements such as rosemary, lavender, lamb's ears,

yarrows, artemesias, and sages. Although most native plants do well with less attention than most exotics, it must be kept in mind that all native plants, no matter how drought-tolerant, must have frequent watering during the first dry season after they are planted.

Since there are so many native annuals, perennials, bulbs, vines, and shrubs, it is impossible to name more than a few examples. Some wildflowers found here that are possibilities for a natural garden are Shooting Stars (*Didecatheon*), and Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). Both can be propagated by divisions. Wild Irises such as the Douglas Iris can also be started by divisions. Irises are excellent under oaks, are drought-tolerant and spread rapidly. Available in nurseries and easily started from seed are California Poppies and Lupines. Mariposa Tulips take three or more years to flower. This makes them a little more difficult to grow but still well worth the effort.

The Native Plant Society holds plant sales each year where native plants and seeds are sold. Nurseries specializing in native plants are listed in the Yellow Pages and the books listed below give sources for companies that offer native plants and seeds.

SOURCES

Keator, Glenn. Complete Guide to the Native Perennials of California. 1990. Chronicle Books, San Francisco.

Schmidt, Marjorie G. Growing Calif. Native Plants. 1980. U. of Calif. Press, Berkeley

A Brief History of Bennett Valley

by Linda Huismam

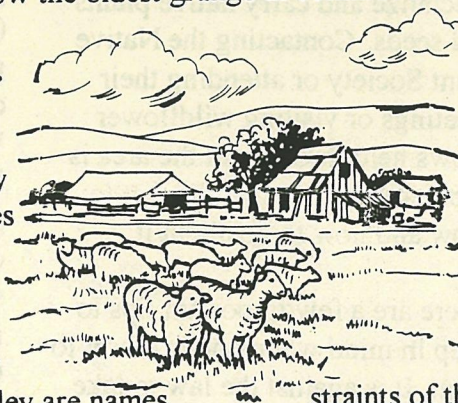
California statehood was declared in 1850 and the county lines were drawn. James Bennett, a squatter in the valley which bore his name, was elected to the legislature. He introduced a bill to change the Sonoma County seat from Sonoma City to Santa Rosa.

Bennett Valley might easily have been named for another pioneer, Isaac Deturk, who settled in the valley about 1852, and made a great contribution to the valley's history and economy. Perhaps if the phylloxera scourge of the 1890s had not caused the farmers to abandon wine grapes in favor of stronger crops, Deturk might have risen to more lasting prominence and his name would be remembered today.

Another early pioneer was Coleman Talbot, who owned property adjacent to the Carrithers on Bennett Valley Road. That property was used for growing grapes and had been bought from James Bennett, who had bought it from General Vallejo. Part of that land surrounds the Bennett Valley Volunteers Firehouse.

A pioneer landmark is the Bennett Valley cemetery at the south-east intersection of Bennett Valley Road and Yulupa Ave. Although the sign is gone and headstones are broken, the cemetery is still in business (but it has been several years since anyone was buried there). Many of the early settlers were from Missouri and other southern states. Bennett Valley had a post office until 1880, located in Dana Brenner's blacksmith shop on Bennett Valley Road. In 1850, Bennett Valley School was established and in 1873, the Grange was founded, built of redwood at a total cost of \$282.82! The Bennett Valley Grange was the first grange in Sonoma County and among the first in the state, and is now the oldest grange in continuous use in the U.S.A

Bennett Valley was slow to develop, mostly as farms and dairies. In the early 1900's, most of the residents were farmers of grapes, walnuts, hay prunes, cattle, and sheep. The names are still familiar to us: Talbot, Mitchell, Kirch, Guenza, Beck, Peracca, Bush, LaFranconi, Walker, Batesole, Jamison, Sibbald, Branger and Brovelli. Many roads in the valley are names after these early residents. By 1917 there were two wineries, nine vineyards, ten orchards, four chicken ranches, and five sheep ranches. In those days a trip



into town (Santa Rosa) would be an all-day event with a load of firewood and vegetables to sell.

As development increased in the 1970's, the County wisely took steps to preserve the valley's rural character, and thus a citizens groups, under the authority of the County, created the Bennett Valley Specific Plan. The con-

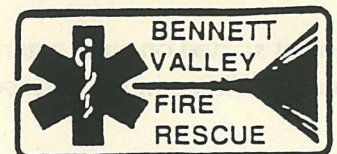
straints of this Plan, now updated and renamed the Bennett Valley Area Plan, have been the reason why the valley is just as beautiful and almost as peaceful as when James Bennet arrived. We trust that it will always be so.

Bennett Valley Community Day

COMMUNITY DAY 1995 was a tremendous success, On behalf of the Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters' Association and the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District, we want to extend our sincerest gratitude to the community for their great participation in this event. Contributions, as well as proceeds earned from the day's barbecue, auction, and sales will all be used to benefit those residents and visitors within our district when emergency services are needed.

With such helpful support, our goals of maintaining the best lifesaving equipment and high level of training can continue to be met which everyone deserves to receive when such assistance is necessary. We are truly grateful for such overwhelming support.....thank you so much!

Mike Matthews, Jr.
Community Day Coordinator, Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters' Association



Election of Board of Directors

As indicated by the green post card that you received last month, this year we will have elections by mail in order to have greater representation. There will be three openings on the Board. Two residents, Nancy Dell'Ergo and Ray Lemieux have placed themselves in nomination in addition to Board members Geoff Hornsby and Bill Sullivan who are seeking re-election. The following are statements by the nominees.

Nancy Dell'Ergo: I have lived in Bennett Valley for the last 13 years with my husband and two sons. I am currently studying print making at S.R.J.C. I really love the friendliness and warmth of the people, the serenity, the beauty and the feeling of country living within close proximity of the city. I would like to be a part of the BV.H.A. as a way of giving back something to this area that has given me so much over the years. Two things that I am strongly opposed to are a Highway 12 extension through the Valley and further encroachment of our county borders by the city. Trying to retain our rural character with continuing growth is a challenge, and I am willing to work hard to keep this Valley a place we can all call home.

Geoff Hornsby: I have been a resident of Bennett Valley since 1979 and am a former leader of the Bennett Valley 4-H club. I own a small property valuation and right of way acquisition management firm in Santa Rosa, G.F. Hornsby and Associates and am therefore acquainted with land use issues, which is one of the more important aspects of the Homeowners Association responsibilities. I never cease to marvel at our Valley's scenic beauty and if re-elected will continue to do all in my power to preserve it. However, I am also a firm advocate of individual property rights and believe they must not be minimized by the Board of Directors. I look forward to serving an additional three year term.

Ray Longman: I am a 25 year B.V. resident and I am strongly committed to the Valley's rural preservation, with special emphases on agriculture and vineyards. For the past 12 years I have served on the Bennett Ridge Architectural Committee, and I am also a former member of the Bennett Valley Design Review Committee. Because I am a semi-retired

architect, I am able to bring my time, knowledge and experience community committees. I would like to continue to share my experience with the community by being a director on the B.V. Homeowners. The work ahead is challenging because of the increasing pressures for large scale sub-divisions.

Wm. E. Sullivan: Resident of Bennett Valley for 23 years. Currently member of Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association and the Bennett Ridge Community Association. Past President and current member of Bennett Ridge Community Association and Bennett Ridge Mutual Water Company. CEO (retired) Merit Ends, Inc. Dedicated to the long-term preservation of our unique Bennett Valley environment through non-confrontational means. (No guns, but political strong-arming OK).

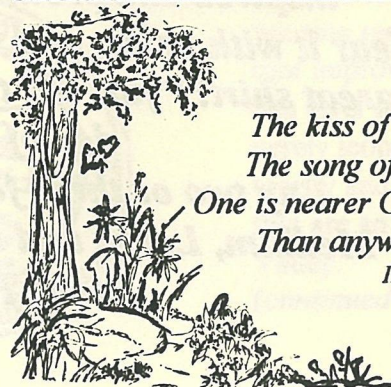
Vote for Three Candidates:

Please return your ballot in the enclosed envelope. There will be no nominations from the floor. Votes will be tallied and results announced at the October 17th Board meeting, 7:30 PM at the Fire Station.

We would appreciate your feed-back, written on the other side of the ballot, as to your opinion on whether mail voting is a new improved voting method or not.....thanks!.

Board of Directors

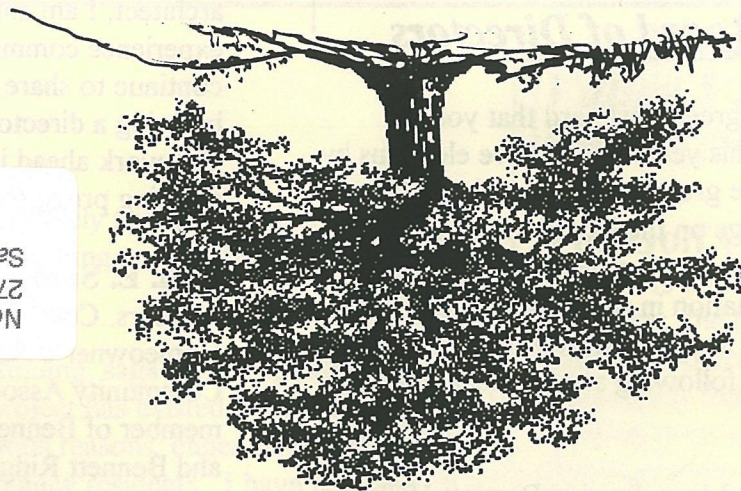
Lois Brown	President
Roger Creer	V-President
Marge Simon	Secretary
Sharon Delaney	Treasurer
Eve Boling	Voice Editor
Bill Sullivan	Jerry Toso
Geoff Hornsby	Marilyn Stocks



*The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.*

Dorothy Frances Gurney 1913

Norm and Eve Boling
2769 Rollo Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

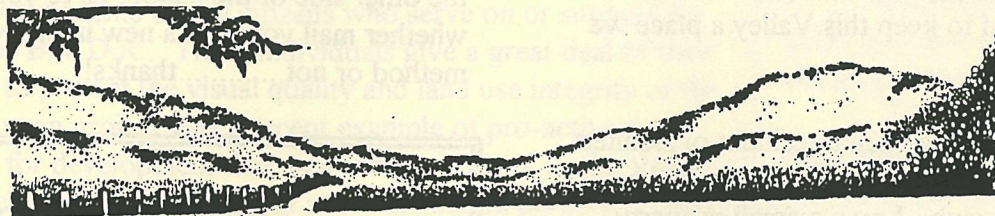


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Bennett Valley T-Shirts

Support our Volunteer Fire Fighters by purchasing a beautiful Bennett Valley T-Shirts.

The shirts depict the beauty of our rolling hills as shown above and there is a choice of either Oaktree green or natural. They were designed by local artist Nancy Dell'Ergo, and inspired and produced by Dan Felciano.

Wear it with pride, and when people ask "where did you get that great shirt?" just tell them to go to the Fire Station any day of the week.

*Buy two or three for Christmas presents
Medium, Large and Extra Large only \$12.00
At the Fire Station*