

Chapter 18

A WELCOME ROUTINE

I was much happier being sworn in for my second full term than I had been four years before. The city was organized and being a councilmember did not seem to be such a bone-crushing burden.

With thirteen names on the ballot, and some of the opposition spending a lot of money, Jo Anne Darcy had won the support of 52% of the voters and I had gained a convincing 40%. Clyde Smyth had finally won by sixteen votes; the final results were announced on April 14. Jill Klajic was gracious.

The opposition started their campaign against us the day before we were sworn in. A rambling “Tell It to the Signal” piece accused us of being in favor of the Elsmere dump and giving millions of the taxpayers’ dollars to the developers. Had *The Signal* required these people sign their names we might have been able to find out what was really bothering them, or perhaps write them off as lunatics. The parting swipe was particularly unfair. “The only evidence of self-government besides an increasingly expensive city staff is bus service. That service can’t be very good, because the city employees won’t use it. Instead, the council is granting them a day off to help solve the air pollution problem, at taxpayers’ expense.”¹

There was indeed a lot of evidence of self-government for those detectives who knew how to find it. New parks were in operation, having been built in record time. Recreation programs were expanding dramatically. The opposition could protest in the evenings, when it was convenient. They could get all their councilmembers on the phone, and we returned their calls and saw them in our offices. We had more Sheriff’s deputies on patrol. We had no utility or business taxes, and the transient occupancy tax had held steady, instead of being increased as it had been in the unincorporated areas.

Yes, we had a growing staff. We were providing more services as we phased out contracts with the county and private enterprise to save money. Our employees were no longer working forty hours per week, but eighty hours every two weeks. I wondered if any of our critics had ever been on a city bus in any city; the passenger count was growing at a faster rate than any other bus system in the country.

The major order of business of the new council was to suspend efforts to take over the Santa Clarita Water Company, which had put itself up for sale to the highest public agency bidder. The Bonellis and their fellow investors wanted to cash out. Most of them lived far away. If they could get the city or the Castaic Lake Water Agency, or perhaps even the Newhall County Water District, to make a friendly condemnation they would get their money and big tax benefits.

I felt the CLWA should stay out of retail water. There were real doubts about the legality of the water wholesaler taking over. The municipality was a logical buyer, and I had hopes that the city would eventually accomplish a friendly take-

over of Santa Clarita Water, the Newhall County Water District, and perhaps more purveyors. The city could have insisted on ground water management, one of the duties the CLWA was supposed to have as a result of legislation in the mid-1980s, but had never tackled. In addition, developers would have had to communicate more with the city, and the city would have a better argument for a real sphere of influence.

However, right after the earthquake our negotiations to purchase the company were broken off by the Bonellis. It seemed to me that CLWA was willing to offer more money. It made no sense to have two public agencies with essentially the same taxpayer base bidding against each other for a private company.

Jan Heidt made an impassioned plea to the new council to continue trying to take over Santa Clarita Water, but she was not convincing us to throw more money into the effort. Turning on a dime, she moved to drop any effort at the takeover, and we abandoned it.²

We met annually with Supervisor Mike Antonovich, who came out to Santa Clarita for breakfast with the council. We always submitted our questions and concerns in advance so the Supervisor could be prepared fully. I asked for a summit of county and local officials, and other stakeholders, including community organizations, developers and school districts, to outline how the Santa Clarita Valley would develop politically over the next fifty or one hundred years. The problem was that even with the development of a city general plan for the entire valley there was still a lot of growth without any thought given to its political impact.

My concern was that I could see as many as four cities being developed in the valley. Of course Newhall Ranch, Stevenson Ranch and Castaic could join Santa Clarita by annexation. However, Newhall Ranch, with a projected 23,000 new homes, which was just a gleam in Newhall Land's eye at that time, was west of Magic Mountain, a good distance from Santa Clarita. While I did not see it being able to support itself, on buildout it seemed possible. If Newhall Land and Farming intended to keep Newhall Ranch out of our city I wanted them to say so. Then we could work to give the people of Newhall Ranch the kind of balanced economy Santa Clarita enjoyed, with a couple of automobile dealerships to anchor their tax revenue, since population and sales tax revenue were the keys to city finance.

Stevenson Ranch and Castaic had the same problem. Auto row was established firmly on Creekside in Santa Clarita. It would be many, many years before dealerships would want to locate in either Stevenson Ranch or Castaic, and this meant years of development under county control, to lower county standards. Being closer to Santa Clarita, they might try to compete with us for retail outlets; competition had not been good for Lancaster and Palmdale. The two cities in the Antelope Valley had finally worked out a revenue sharing agreement, and I suggested we try to do the same with the county, but it was not to happen. The county and Newhall Land make decisions every day impacting our future with no real thought given to their long term effects.

It was not only the county dragging its feet, but some of the local people. Landowners in Castaic wanted nothing to do with the city because they felt staying in the unincorporated territory was to their personal benefit. The rest of the people found it easy to sway with the naysayers.³

Jill Klajic's graciousness lasted six days. The count we certified was 3,804 votes for Smyth and 3,788 for Klajic. Under the circumstances she had every right to ask for a recount, but she had already conceded. Then she said, "We're discovering people in town received more than one absentee ballot and sent in more than one. The whole thing has become very suspicious."

Her sometime boyfriend, Skip Newhall, said, "I'd be surprised if there was a change. It is possible. This will lay the whole thing to rest. Otherwise people would be asking why we didn't do the recount.

"I'm a very bad loser," he said. "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser."⁴

The recount was held. Jill lost.

After the earthquake we had gone to work quickly trying to figure out how we were going to rebuild. With city hall covered by earthquake insurance, and much of the rest of the damage to public property covered by FEMA, the city was in a sound position financially. However, the earthquake was an opportunity to develop an "earthquake recovery" agency, which was a redevelopment agency under another name. Redevelopment had become a dirty word in California because of abuses associated with it in other cities. The city had inherited a huge infrastructure deficit from years of county neglect of the problems of growth. The CLWA had come out in opposition very quickly. Other agencies were supportive, and we came very close to succeeding with formation of the agency.

I-5 was being repaired, and by mid-May Caltrans finished the rebuilding of the Gavin Canyon bridges. E.L. Yeager Construction Co. of Riverside had bid low on the project, expecting to make its profit on the bonus of \$150,000 per day for each day ahead of June 8 the bridge was finished. It had been a magnificent effort. The economy was to benefit a great deal more than \$150,000 per day.⁵

Santa Clarita's budget was in the works. Revenues were generally flat. Much of the spending would not occur unless earthquake recovery plans and FEMA monies were in place.⁶

Anthony Skirlick, in a letter headed "She Ain't Dead," called attention to the fact that Leon Worden, who was then my son-in-law, was a volunteer columnist for *The Signal*. Apparently that was supposed to give me leverage in the local press. I did not have any leverage. Once or twice Leon called me to ask questions of a factual nature. Once or twice I called Leon to tell him he had gotten the facts wrong. The rest of the time I lived with the fact that a lot of people thought Leon was my campaign manager, and that I had a special inside track. My wife, Chris, who had managed my campaign that year, had no more of an inside track than I did, nor did daughter Danielle.

I still had a problem with the "Tell It to the Signal" column being published with a lot of anonymous half-truths and lies, few of which were ever refuted by

a factual editorial rebuttal. It was too bad the paper's job was to sell papers rather than emphasize the truth to the public. Finally some who abused the column, which was later posted on the internet, caused its demise.

Skirlick made the point to Tim Whyte, "It looks like you're trying to nail Jill's political coffin shut. Only problem is, pal, she ain't dead. And worse, she ain't inside. Tim, she's still walking around." She sure was.⁷

I summed up my feelings about the change in a paragraph published in Leon Worden's ...*Synopsis*, the well-done organ of The Santa Clarita Valley Congress of Republicans. "There will always be room for differences on issues. I do not anticipate that there will be any less debate than before. I do hope that people will see a different tone to the debate, an effort to reach consensus rather than one of a victory for one side over another."⁸

In May we finally got around to passing a revised smoking ordinance. I had taken the lead in developing an ordinance because I felt the issue deserved a hearing. We had completed a preliminary adoption of a law banning smoking in restaurants and other workplaces in a near vacuum of public input that made me uncomfortable. As *Signal* columnist Dwight Jurgens put it, "Boyer did not reinvent the wheel – he played it right out of Government 101. He contacted the media and said he wanted to hear what restaurant owners had to say, and if the restaurant owners wanted to remain sitting on their duffs rather than attending hearings on the matter, then they get what they deserve, and deserve what they get...."

"Last week the third revision passed. It will allow restaurants dependent on customers to make their own decisions, it will outlaw vending machines, and it will allow employees and businessmen who have private offices with ventilation systems to smoke until they drop."⁹

Public input had improved the ordinance. Santa Clarita was not in position to simply "go it alone" with many restaurants across the freeway in the county. The question was to be resolved at the state level somewhat later. *The Signal* editorial on the ban called it an "act of cowardice."¹⁰

In June 1994 the question of commission appointments came up. I renominated Louis Brathwaite and Laurene Weste to the planning and parks and recreation commissions respectively. There had been a lot of turnover, and I felt that having some people on the commissions with historical knowledge would help. Jo Anne Darcy reappointed Jerry Cherrington and Jeff Wheeler. Clyde Smyth appointed Linda Townsley to replace Jack Woodrow, and kept George Stigile, who had been appointed by Klajic. Woodrow had contributed a great deal.¹¹

The January earthquake had devastated the mobile home parks. In June we had to deal with the park owners' requests for rent increases above the city imposed cap, and a renewed effort to resolve the space renters' need for relief, with 1,600 mobile homes (of a total of 2,400) knocked off their piers. We had taken a very aggressive stand on helping people get their mobile homes off the ground. Planner Kevin Michel had worked very hard to have the city authorized

to take the lead, and finally the state Office of Emergency Services and FEMA were catching up. However, not everyone had solved the other problems. Crescent Valley was a park on The Old Road south of the city limits that we had treated like our own, but FEMA was pulling out funding for showers and they had a makeshift water supply that was a big problem. We made sure they had drinking water and better representation to outside agencies than the county could provide.¹²

Our \$69 million budget was adopted with no raises except for the Sheriff's deputies – their raises were decided by the county, with which we contracted. Some jobs were left vacant, but no one was laid off. We were able to give a \$10,000 grant to the Canyon Theater Guild, and establish a fund of \$120,000 to guarantee the second Cowboy Poetry Festival. The first festival had lost \$25,000 when we had to shift from the badly damaged Hart High Auditorium to Melody Ranch, but the shift to Melody Ranch insured future success. The Canyon Theater Guild's tremendous success with *Fiddler on the Roof* set the stage the future success of a theatre district in downtown Newhall. When the federal government forced the city to set up a storm abatement program we did institute a \$24 per house charge to pay for it. This program was designed to ensure that whatever drained into the ocean would not add to the pollution.¹³

We never did get a low-cost housing project built with funds from the Tzu-Chi Foundation USA. The Buddhists had made a very generous offer, but local citizens were suspicious. The easiest way out was to be responsive while failing to take charge. We had other problems to tackle.¹⁴

Months after the earthquake I got a call from a lady named Mickey who was living as caregiver with her aged mother in a large senior apartment complex in Newhall. They had had no success in getting the damage to their apartment repaired. The biggest problem was plaster dust, and the management had not even cooperated in putting in a request for help from the California Conservation Corps. Since they were receiving federal housing aid they were terrified that their apartment would not pass inspection.

I put many hours of personal labor into helping them clean up, and one day some volunteers from church helped them make a temporary move so that plastering and painting could finally be done. The biggest problem they had, however, was their reluctance to ask for help, and one time when I went to visit them they were no longer there. I never heard what had happened.

In another area, Linda Storli filed a complaint with the city, saying that my campaign manager had done something illegal, that is, work for me and work for an independent campaign. I wished she had called me, because she thought that Laurene Weste had been my manager. Admittedly, when I thanked my campaign manager the night I was sworn in, people turned to look at Laurene, but it was my wife, Chris, who I introduced. I did indeed have some idea of some of the independent campaigning Laurene was doing, but she was very tight lipped.¹⁵

On August 19 *The Signal* slammed the city council editorially, saying we had done nothing about garbage piling up between the buildings at 24248 and 24254

Race Street, on the property at 24254, which had been abandoned. “This is a problem that can be solved quickly and cheaply. There are no bureaucratic entanglements to contend with, no fiscal restraints, no need to hire a new fulltime \$70,000-a-year-plus specialist to draw up a plan of attack or take a survey. This is a job that can be done without a single consultant.

“This can be done with a work crew in a morning. So do it.”

Several council members went down to look at the mess right away. I was one of them. We cleaned up the mess. I would have been much more impressed with *The Signal* if they had phoned in a complaint and then written an editorial about how fast, or how slow, we had responded. No, we did not have city employees driving around looking for garbage between buildings, traffic lights that are not working, and the like. What we did have was a system that enabled us to take complaints in fourteen languages. A telephone call in Lithuanian would have gotten results.

As county fund shortages produced severe cutbacks, we approved the city’s participation in a new library assessment district formed by the Board of Supervisors. The fee was to range from \$14.25 to \$200 per lot, with single family homeowners paying \$28.50. Most of the cities voted against joining, allowing draconian cutbacks in service. In the debate I said, “This is not a question of a tax increase; this is a question of whether we’re willing to pay for a civilized world.”

Clyde Smyth said, “I believe the proposal is ill-conceived and not honest. Twenty-eight dollars is not an awful lot of money to a lot of people, but it is a lot to some people. In June, we levied a \$24 tax for clean water. We’re looking at another \$28. This isn’t fair.” Of course he was right. The Board of Supervisors was playing hardball, and they won. The big problem is that every time the State of California runs short of money they take money from the counties, cities, special districts, teacher retirement and whatever other funds they can grab, and leave the local politicians to be the bad guys. In this case, the Supervisors had to go looking for more funds, and funds not specifically earmarked for libraries were there, so they were taken, with the public in the unincorporated area and contract cities left to cough up enough to keep the libraries going.¹⁶

In September we made significant concessions to the Castaic Lake Water Agency, reducing the proposed size of the Community Redevelopment Agency by 25%. I was upset with the CLWA. Their board is made up of water professionals who do not seem to have a clue about formulating public policy. In 1982, when I was appointed to the CLWA board to fill a vacancy I tried to get the board to take on unresolved policy issues. Urgently needed was a policy on growth, and who was going to pay for it. Unfortunately, in 1985 I lost my second reelection bid to a water professional, and the questions of public policy took some weird directions. Ultimately, due to legislation sought by the CLWA, four directors from the retail water purveyors were appointed to the CLWA board, which in turn was charged with coming up with ground water management.

I agreed with the board that CLWA’s mission was to provide water, no matter how that had to be done, as long as the board kept to the policy I had sug-

gested, which was that the growth inducing projects paid for the water. Over the years the CLWA became involved in some major projects, and went into debt in the amount of about \$132,000,000. CLWA Manager Bob Sagehorn built his empire while the developers funded the campaigns of water professionals and others sympathetic to them. However, the agency ran into trouble when growth slowed due to the economy. It seemed to me that they were desperately afraid they would have to go into bankruptcy, and a small loss of revenue growth to redevelopment, might be the cause of it.

All I wanted them to do with to communicate with the city. Every other public agency had signed off on the creation of the Community Redevelopment Agency. We were very mindful of the infrastructure deficit, and wanted to solve some of the problems with tax dollars we were paying largely to outside agencies. The CLWA killed a meaningful CRA by refusing to communicate effectively.¹⁷

In September we welcomed Zuzana Jonova, the vice mayor of Hartmanice, Czechoslovakia, who came to work for Santa Clarita, and to observe how we run a city in a democratic country. We also began to broadcast council meetings over cable Channel 20, beginning with a single camera.¹⁸

We made headlines when we totaled the bills for legal services, and found they came to about \$900,000 in the course of a year. The redevelopment and anti-Elsmere efforts were major causes of the high costs. City Attorney Carl Newton was serving under a contract with the Los Angeles firm of Burke, Williams and Sorenson. He worked part time on Santa Clarita's issues, and billed at \$115 per hour. Other services that the firm provided cost extra.

We considered hiring an attorney full time, but decided that the contract with Burke, Williams and Sorenson was more effective. No attorney can deal with all the issues, and all cities, whether they have an in house attorney or not, contract with outside firms on a regular basis.¹⁹

National events often cause repercussions on cities. The politicians in Sacramento were trying to figure out how California could have more of a voice in choosing presidential nominees, and decided to move the primary elections from June to March. The county said that our elections, held in April, could not be moved to March because they could not handle the extra load. We could extend our terms until the following March, however. None of us were willing to extend our terms for eleven months. George Pederson made it clear that his commitment was for four years only. I was looking forward to retirement at the end of my term. Eventually we decided that we would conduct our own elections, and not change the date. That is why we get the complete preliminary returns at a decent hour, instead of about 3:00 a.m.

Developers came back to the Council with another proposal for building on 31.8 acres off Pamplico Drive. They had previously been turned down by the council, and had asked to be allowed to come back without paying any more application fees. I had said that in my field people paid tuition to take a course, and if they failed it that was too bad. They could not take the course over again free of charge. The builders still did not have something we could approve this

time either. I said, "The developer paid their tuition again and failed the course again."²⁰

Diane Ortega wrote to *The Signal* to express her appreciation for the response to her letters. She had asked for a sports complex on Bouquet Canyon Road. I really appreciated her making the effort to inform the public that she got a positive response, and that we had said we were working on it. That complex is now called Central Park. Council members got very few letters, and most of them were either negative or downright insulting. I tried to answer every one, hoping that a response might help improve someone's mood. Most answers I typed at home, but some I wrote in longhand wherever I could. Sometimes a classroom full of fourth graders would write, and that took more time, even though I was able to use my computer to help handle the similar letters. I carried work with me wherever I went. They all went out on city letterhead with the councilmembers' names on it.²¹

In December Jo Anne Darcy began her second term as Mayor. She had caused some controversy by giving a county planner a copy of a memo written by City Attorney Carl Newton. The ten-page memo did outline points about which we might sue the county concerning the proposed Valencia Marketplace. Some saw this as being loyal to the county instead of the city. I did not doubt her loyalty to the city one bit. Jo Anne was trying to open communications and modify the county's position. It was not easy working as a field deputy for a county supervisor and serving our city as a councilmember, but I was certain that she was doing good work in both jobs. The memo had not been stamped confidential. The entire Council joined in electing her as Mayor for the 1994-1995 term.²²

As Jo Anne was elected mayor I was elected Mayor pro-tem. I thought nothing about it. The rotation was working. A couple of days later Dwight Jurgens' column recounted a conversation with George Pederson, who had said that Clyde Smyth should be the next mayor. I understood George's position, which I assumed was that he wanted new councilmembers to serve as Mayor as quickly as possible. However, he had never said this was his intent in seeking his own election as Mayor out of turn. Had he brought it up at a council meeting I would have suggested he nominate Clyde as Mayor pro tem. After all, three votes can change council policy any time. I still believe that the Mayor should have as much experience as possible on the council. There is almost always some turnover on a council, but even if there was not any, under our policy each newly elected councilmember would at the very least have a partial term as mayor before standing for the next election. As it was, George wound up being perceived by Jurgens as a "big part of 'good ol' boy' network."²³

At the time, however, I was a lot more interested in helping my wife take care of Raulito Figueroa, a three-month-old baby from Guatemala City who was staying with us while recuperating from open-heart surgery. Years later, while presiding over an annual conference of Healing the Children in Guatemala, I had the joy of seeing Raulito again as a healthy six-year-old.²⁴

The issue of unlicensed contractors doing earthquake repairs continued. Building permits are cheap, but contractors avoiding permits usually are unlicensed, or may be planning to do work which cannot pass inspection. People who fail to insist on building permits, perhaps because of their small cost or because they know an increase in property taxes can result, are shortsighted. In the long run they may be out a huge amount of money to have the work done a second time, even if they have already sold the house.²⁵

Denis Wolcott did a story in the *Daily News* on January 2, 1995 about possible candidates for the State Senate. I had been asked to run by a person with great clout, and had said no. I told Denis the same thing. I wanted to retire and volunteer for Healing the Children.

Early in 1995 an In-n-Out Burger store was the subject of a lot of controversy. I agreed with some that one did not belong on Sand Canyon Road. However, I did not like the way the opponents spliced videotape to show us a large amount of traffic. I abstained from the vote, but was told in a "Tell It to the Signal" that I was elected to make decisions, not abstain. An abstention is a decision. I did not vote yes, and therefore did not contribute to the three yes votes. Three abstentions work just as well as no votes. I would have voted no if the opponents had not fiddled with the video.²⁶

The council debate concerning the plans for the mall centered on the number of palm trees. The builders said they would plant male palm trees, which do not reproduce. George Pederson said, "The one question I have is the one I'm afraid to ask. How do you tell the difference between a male palm tree and a female palm tree?"

We had spent a lot of time on the palm tree issue, but Clyde Smyth was right when he said we had formed our city so we could discuss local issues, large and small. "I doubt you could go before the Board of Supervisors and yell about your palm trees."²⁷

Meanwhile we were hosting Inna Shayakhmetova, aged 2, from Zlatoust, Russia. Inna was born without a left foot and had a bone growth that threatened her life. The bone problem could not be treated in Russia, but could be resolved at Shriners Hospital Los Angeles. Between a long recovery from her surgery, being fitted with a prosthesis, and learning how to walk, Inna was with us for over four months. When she got off the plane in Moscow, her family was amazed that she spoke fluent English, and did not notice at first that she could walk! When *The Signal* asked me to write a guest column, they got one not from a councilmember, but from a host parent for Healing the Children.²⁸

If you were to study the front-page photo in the March 20, 1995, issue of *Nation's Cities Weekly*, you would find me in a photograph with President Clinton. I was pushed into it by the crowd.

Don Mullally spent years working to make the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park a reality. When I first noticed the woods in the 1960s I had assumed they were part of the National Forest. They were not. The City of Santa Clarita made the purchase possible by buying the Rivendale Equestrian Center for \$2 million. As

it developed, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy bought a bunch of land and Chevron kicked in a lot more. It was great knowing that creating the park would impact the quality of life one thousand years from now. With all the sentiment against growth I never could figure out why people were not screaming that we should have a city bond issue to allow us to buy even more land.²⁹

On April 25, 1995 the proposed Wiley Canyon bridge was on the agenda again. This was an emotional issue for many people. Circle J Ranch residents wanted the bridge so they could get across the railroad tracks in case of an emergency. Some Valencia residents did not want the bridge because they knew that traffic on Wiley Canyon would increase, thus creating more noise. It was true that the homes backing on Wiley Canyon had lower value than others. I did not know whether they sold for lower prices originally. Newhall Land's maps of Valencia always showed the north end of Wiley Canyon as open to extension.

Previously we had gone through a number of sessions with a lot of heated testimony. We had made a decision to build Wiley Canyon bridge in the future subject to earlier completion of some other projects, including the widening of the Lyons Avenue bridge across I-5 and the widening of Wiley Canyon south of Lyons avenue. If the bridge was going to be built, generating more traffic, I did not want it backed up further to the south.

Chris and I had bought our home at 24200 Cheryl Kelton Place in 1976. We were about 150 feet from Wiley Canyon and could hear the traffic. When I made the motion to have that part of Wiley Canyon widened I knew it was going to cause more traffic and more noise for us. I told my neighbors what was going to happen eventually. None tried to fight it, but some moved. We did not.

On April 28 a "Tell It to the Signal" appeared. "Getting their way. Please give the Wiley Canyon residents a message: You don't need to expend very much energy to stop the proposed Wiley Canyon/Via Princessa bridge. City Council member Carl Boyer doesn't want it either. So you'll get your way, again. Obviously, only some of these people live in the areas that will be affected by the bridge. Remember what happened about seven years ago. It was the same thing – Valencia residents stating, 'It affects our quality of life,' and (residents) favoring (the bridge) stating, 'It affects the safety of our families.' After all the City Council meetings and studies, the council *approved* it, and it was placed on the list of roads to be built, again. But they placed it on the list for *after* they completed the beautification of Soledad Canyon and all the phases of widening and improvements on San Fernando Road. By doing that, they pacified the Valencia residents. Well, here we are, getting closer to that completion, and just as I thought, once it becomes a possible reality, the people will organize a new movement, again. I can't wait to hear Carl Boyer's comments this time, because he showed a true lack of concern toward anyone other than his own neighborhood. So save your energy, Valencia residents. You'll probably get your way, again."

The beautification of Soledad Canyon had nothing to do with the bridge. It was simply a project that had been scheduled to be completed before the San Fer-

nando Road widening was finished. The San Fernando Road project needed to be done before we started on the bridge for two reasons. First, doing construction over a construction site does not make sense, and this was a project the state was involved in, so the road widening got priority. Second, if the bridge was done before San Fernando Road was widened, a tremendous amount of traffic would flood Wiley Canyon all at once. Incremental change is acceptable, but sudden tremendous change is obviously not. The person who posted this comment apparently thought I lived in Valencia. I never have. If anything, I wanted the bridge, and all of Via Princessa, to be built so I could drive by a convenient route to Canyon Country, where a daughter and granddaughter live. However, I knew that was not going to happen within a decade. It is true that the completion of the bridge did knock half a mile and six traffic lights off my old route to Canyon Country.

The next posting was published on May 1. “Minds made up on Wiley? This call is directed to the residents of Wiley Canyon. I attended the City Council session last night (April 25) with regard to Wiley Canyon, and I was also at the April 4 new roads study session. I have several concerns and would like to share them with those residents. I don’t live in the area, so it doesn’t pertain to me. 1. Mr. Janka, the (city’s) traffic engineer, indicated that Wiley Canyon would still have its median and would be a *four*-lane extension that crosses through the bridge. Yet, at the study session on April 4, he indicated that the build-out would indeed, be to *six* lanes. He led the audience last night to believe that it will be only four lanes. That is only currently true. 2. He indicated that all the different groups that voted on this issue – one of them being the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) – had concurred with the decisions on Wiley Canyon. The question is: How can that be true when only five of the eleven members voted? And of the five only four voted for it. In other words, they did not even have a quorum. 3. At the April 4 study session, a member of the audience brought up the issue of Wiley Canyon and Councilman Carl Boyer immediately came back to them and said this had previously been decided and he doesn’t want to discuss it or hear about it! Are they saying that their minds are made up and they don’t want to be confused by facts or anything else? I think the citizens need to be aware of this.”

The decision to put an extension of Wiley Canyon on the Newhall Land map was made in the 1960s. The city approved the bridge after extensive public hearings. Nothing had changed to make the facts any different. The residents of Circle J Ranch had a point. They were paying almost a thousand dollars a year each into a Mello-Roos fund for the building of a bridge that had been postponed for years, and had been required of the developer as a condition by the county before Santa Clarita was born.

In the same column (May 1) appeared another “Tell It.” “Hear our concerns! After attending a long, crowded and tiresome City Council meeting last night (April 25), I came away positive of only one thing – that Councilman Carl Boyer and Mayor Jo Anne Darcy obviously have no intention of ever running for public

office again. They repeated gave the impression that they did not care about the opinions or feelings of their fellow Santa Claritans. Perhaps Mr. Boyer and Mrs. Darcy should spend less time in City Hall, and more time observing and listening to the concerns of their constituents – i.e., the voting public.”

My behavior was never based on whether or not I was planning to run for another term, or any other office. However, I had decided that my life on the council was going to end in 1998. Jo Anne was probably thinking the same thing, but ran in 1998 and was reelected handsomely. What bothered me was the fact that someone could get this into print while hiding behind *The Signal*.

In contrast, another “Tell It” was published May 4. “Utter lack of class. I am responding to the caller complaining about Councilman Carl Boyer and Mayor Jo Anne Darcy not caring about the opinions or feelings of their fellow Santa Claritans (May 1). I, too, was at that long, crowded, tiresome City Council meeting (April 25), and I was amazed at the lack of respect and blatant rudeness exhibited by these so-called adults. We wouldn’t dare behave like that at PTA meetings. How can you people expect to be taken seriously while acting like a bunch of unruly brats? Yelling ‘boo!’ at speakers you don’t agree with is childish, asinine behavior that wouldn’t be tolerated in a kindergarten class. There were also loud, disruptive conversations going on in the back of the room by people proud to display their utter lack of class. And then, after this disgusting display of buffoonery and belligerence, you actually complain because Carl Boyer and Jo Anne Darcy weren’t listening to you?”

I am quite sure I was listening. I will never forget the meetings of the Board of Supervisors during which members spoke to other, took breaks and chatted with staff while the public was giving testimony. Giving credence to what I was hearing was another matter.

In spite of the occasional council meeting where tempers flared, we did work with the public. When Zuzana Jonova went home to Hartmanice in her attempt to improve the workings of democracy in the Czech Republic, she said, “I now understand that the government has to continually work with the citizens. My government doesn’t have experience with this. I think government leaders in my country forget citizens might want something different than they do.” This was what her internship was all about. I was particularly glad that she was able to observe one of the strategic planning sessions we hold every three years. Having the public come in to set priorities is the foundation of our city’s policy.³⁰

Rent stabilization for mobile home parks was an issue resulting from the Northridge earthquake of January 17, 1994. Some of the space renters had moved out when their units collapsed, and the vacancy rate was above five per cent in many parks. This was a factor allowing park owners to get out from under rent control. We had a problem with that. Some of the park owners had not made an adequate effort to clean up their own mess. People in the industry would brag one minute about where else can an investor make 40% annually, and then turn around and cry about how they had their life savings in a certain park, and were heading for bankruptcy.

I looked at the economic situation in light of the fact that a park owner could put a down payment into a mobile home park, and with each rent increase improve the value of the land by a similar percentage. He might buy a \$3 million park for \$300,000 down, bump the rent five per cent a year (compounded), thus more than doubling his investment in two years while paying the mortgage out of current income. The unit owners often found themselves in a mobile home that could not be moved, either because it would fall apart in the process or would be prohibitively expensive. Furthermore, the park owners could take over any mobile home left on the property by space renters who could not afford the rent increases or the moving bill!³¹ I wanted equity. The risk takers should be allowed to make a good return commensurate with their investment. The space renters should not be forced to become homeless.

The installation of gates on private streets was another concern. Staff kept bringing the issue to the council. Most of us did not want to deal with it. Staff would not give up. We got irritated. Staff took some lumps in public. I was one of those handing out the lumps. However, staff was right. Lynn Harris, the Director of Public Works, finally got her way.³²

If *The Signal* was not dishing it out in the “Tell It” column with its anonymous, sometimes malicious, and frequently untruthful statements, they handed the job over to John Boston, our local humorist. For the July 4th parade they always printed a schedule, and frequently Boston would run an even bigger humor column, which was a spoof on the schedule. I got off easy. Entry No. 30 was Smile Foundation Men of the Year – Voted to the two happiest Joes in the SCV – George Carvalho and Carl Boyer. Jo Anne Darcy, Jan Heidt, parks commissioner Laurene Weste, and employee No. 1 Carmen Sarro had their names in captions under “their” pictures, which were photos perhaps cut from various lingerie catalogs.³³

Speculation about who was going to run for the council began late in August, about the same time that people from Val Verde came to us for help in fighting the Chiquita Landfill, which had been scheduled to close in 1997. If Val Verde had actively supported being in Santa Clarita’s sphere of influence the result might have been different. As it was, only Jan Heidt and I voted in their favor. The city did give them some technical help.³⁴

My wife was finding out what a real disaster was. Chris was part of a Red Cross team in St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, to help care for people made homeless by Hurricane Marilyn. From the air it looked beautiful, with all the blue roofs. However, blue was the color of the tarps covering heavily damaged houses. After weeks the people still had no electricity, phones or water. The island was stripped bare of vegetation, and the birds had lost all of their feathers. Chris will not forget Amanda, a young girl in the shelter with her grandmother. During the thick of the storm Amanda’s family were trying to save what they could. Their stove exploded, burning her mother and uncle very badly.³⁵

At home, one of the truly great events of the year was a work party to clean up Mentryville, which had been virtually abandoned once it suffered heavily in

the Northridge earthquake. Mentryville is located a couple of miles west of the city limits, but the city supported organizing the work party, as did many local organizations. We all went out and worked, whether at painting, repairing or pulling weeds. The Friends of Mentryville, led by Jim McCarthy and others, kept up the effort, which after a few years had glorious results. If the community ran a project like that once every three months our city would be the finest in the world.³⁶

Gail Foy (now Ortiz), our shameless PR person, PIO or whatever, was probably responsible for this item in the Escape section of *The Signal* of December 8. “Non-subliminal Breakfast Message – Just a reminder – Saturday, the City Council, and the government of Indonesia, which owns the City Council like so many shameless puppets, will be hosting the Flapjack Forum. Seriously. All five of our beloved council babes and dudes will be in the Sclarita City Hall parking lot, level 1, 7:30-9:30 in the a.m., dishing out, let’s add another comma here for no reason at all, breakfast. It’s \$2 for adults, \$20 for Really Huge Adults, \$1 for kids or \$5 for the entire family. Council Members Jan Heidt, Jo Anne Darcy, Carl Boyer, Charles Boyer, George Pederson, Clyde Smyth and Parker Stevenson will be wearing matching aprons. Check it out, folks! Pretty tasty eats to give you strength for that local holiday shopping and you can’t beat the price.” Of course I could see the fine hand of John Boston involved in a little editing of Gail’s work.

What we wouldn’t do to get our constituents out to talk with us and help us to celebrate our city’s eighth birthday! About a thousand people showed up, including six hundred participating in the 5K run and walk. I got to cook. That in itself was a laugh.³⁷

¹*The Signal*, 18 April 1994.

²*The Signal*, 20 April 1994.

³*The Signal*, 21 April 1994.

⁴*Daily News*, 21 April 1994.

⁵*Daily News*, 12 May 1994.

⁶*Los Angeles Times*, 15 May 1994.

⁷*The Signal*, 16 May 1994.

⁸...*Synopsis*, 2:5 (May 1994), 5.

⁹*The Signal*, 26 May 1994.

¹⁰*The Signal*, 16 June 1994.

¹¹*Daily News*, 13 June 1994; *The Signal*, 22 June 1994 and 15 July 1994.

¹²*Daily News*, 17 June 1994, and 12 July 1994; *The Signal*, 14 July 1994.

¹³*The Signal*, 26 and 29 June 1994; and *Los Angeles Times*, 29 June 1994.

¹⁴*Daily News*, 11 July 1994.

¹⁵*The Signal*, 27 July 1994.

¹⁶*Daily News*, 25 Aug. 1994; and *The Signal*, 25 Aug. 1994.

¹⁷*Daily News*, 15 Sept. 1994.

- ¹⁸*Daily News*, 8 Sept. 1994; and *Los Angeles Times*, 15 Sept. 1994.
- ¹⁹*The Signal*, 18 Sept. 1994.
- ²⁰*The Signal*, 11 Nov. 1994.
- ²¹*The Signal*, 29 Nov. 1994.
- ²²*The Signal*, 6 Dec. 1994; and *Daily News*, 12 Dec. 1994.
- ²³*The Signal*, 15 Dec. 1994.
- ²⁴*Daily News*, 25 Dec. 1994.
- ²⁵*Daily News*, 30 Dec. 1994.
- ²⁶*The Signal*, 18 Feb. 1995.
- ²⁷*Los Angeles Times*, 2 March 1995; and *Daily News*, 2 March 1995.
- ²⁸*The Signal*, 6 April 1995.
- ²⁹*Daily News*, 17 April 1995; and *The Signal*, 26 April 1995.
- ³⁰*Daily News*, 3 June 1995.
- ³¹*Los Angeles Times*, 15 June 1995.
- ³²*The Signal*, 29 June 1995.
- ³³*The Signal*, 30 June 1995.
- ³⁴*Daily News*, 24 Aug. 1995.
- ³⁵*The Signal*, 19 Nov. 1995.
- ³⁶*Daily News*, 24 Aug. 1995.
- ³⁷*Daily News*, 10 Dec. 1995.