

95.4.2

## Chronological History of Palm Terrace Activity

### Palm Terrace, continued from page 1

a. Many a family dinner, Little League game, and evening was given up so that the opposition to these things would not go unspoken. Many of the warriors in Palm Terrace have moved to other places. I think both the developers and local environmentalists have grown the latest proposal is considerably scaled down. I know that this place is special. Once it is built, it

in the 1980s discussions among those concerned with the environment and quality of life centered largely on saving open space in general. Sonoma County at the time was still a bucolic retreat and any resident with an open space knew how lucky s/he was to live here. The press articles and editorials, as well as Sebastopol newsletters, reflect a public charged up about the impacts, and seeing very clearly the danger on the horizon. The acquisition of open space, the Farm Initiative, and other discussions led to Measure A, an Open Space Initiative and its funding mechanism. I am looking back, we can be even more grateful to our County residents had the vision and back-creativity, fund and approve these mechanisms. In our political climate, one wonders what their fate would be.

When it is a picture not from the scientific EIR point of view, but impacts and mitigations, or a planner's view of land use. At this point there are several feet of documentation: the trail of legal meetings, hearings, reports, people's books and notebooks, newsletters, articles about this land. The records kept by me have fought to save it are incomplete, kept in a file folder, an old notebook on the night stand. Though this isn't a scholarly chronology of all that has happened, the evidence of community involvement. There were midnight phone calls, talking to neighbors to rally the numerous who articulately voiced their dismay and anger; walking in the neighborhoods at close hand arranging photos for a local newspaper; editing of newspapers, council members and staff; gathering of signatures for several petitions of opposition and articles lambasting project operators.

### the Land's Power

Walking on the long slope, the sun and clouds of a clear day are brilliant blue and white. The long grass blows and sweeps green down to the wire along the perforated line of division between the fields. In front of me the sweep continues to pools, winding ribbon of Laguna water, beyond to the hills and on to the purple/blue hills across the Rosa plain. I see the wire "cages" around the planted by school children. Working with the undation and other wonderful volunteers, in 1982 was secured from the Sonoma County Foundation to replant portions of the Laguna area. I have worked with the school children who planted the young oaks, wild rose, and helped them spray paint the wonderful blue sign: "Don't Dump here flows to Laguna." I walked with those same children about the under-ter that flows beneath our feet, beneath the secret streams that flow through Sebastopol, and empty through Ives Park and tumble on to

we are now as an observer, as a lover of the openness of our country, as a person who has taken a stand in this community. I feel the land's beauty and understand that this tremendous connection that people speak of when they connect to the earth. It used to exist, there was pavement of shopping centers and housing trappers and freeways. But it is not retrievable. This land, we still have a chance.

to write this article when my family and I went enough to attend a remarkable meeting in Palm Terrace. At this meeting, many Indian leaders and I know this land, not as Palm Terrace, but as ranch, met to discuss what could be done. To people there, the land is a last remaining ancient homeland. The extraordinary picture of the ranch and before, left many in the moved. That story is another volume in the long time activist fighting development of this land. My reactions was "The only reason this completely developed right now is because of the work of people over the last ten years. The action on this land is something that is recorded."

The point of gathering this data is to try and capture some of the rage and passion of a decade of response to the grinding wheels of bureaucracy, development pressure and (therefore) money. Because gathering this information required sifting through stacks of papers in numerous locations, all of the data is not included. Anyone interested in a more detailed overview is strongly urged to check the public records. Read it as one person's view: a resident's view, an ordinary view of people fighting to save something they know is special and valuable and rare. Read it and know that it is only one person's story, out of how many others. Read it and understand that, even in the face of tremendous opposition, opposition that continued over the years, with new people picking up and carrying the torch, people who stayed the course for a decade, and even a local government which heard these people and responded to them, understand that even with all of this, it looks unpromising that we will be able to save the entire ecosystem from the current proposal.

**July 27, 1990:** The Press Democrat reports: "Since 1976, four separate studies of the Laguna have been carried out by various citizen's groups. The (then) most recent being the report by the Laguna Technical Advisory Committee appointed by (then) Congressman Bosco in August 1988." This committee recommended in its report to establish a National Wildlife Refuge in the Laguna.

**July 1987:** Palm Terrace proposed project: 35 lots plus commercial submitted. Revised to 31 lots plus commercial.

**March 22, 1988:** Planning Commission directs that a Mitigated Negative Declaration (approval with conditions) be prepared.

**April 26, 1988:** Public hearing on Negative Declaration by Planning Commission

**May 10, 1988:** Planning Commission recommends adoption of Mitigated Negative Declaration and approves application for a Use Permit and Major Subdivision.

**June 6, 1988:** City Council adopts Mitigated Negative Declaration and approves Use Permit and Tentative Map, giving the project a green light.

**August 8, 1988:** Citizen's lawsuit filed by "Laguna Today and Tomorrow" against the city and the applicant stating that a new EIR is required.

**October 23, 1988:** Superior Court Judge Lawrence Sawyer grants the petitioners' claim requesting the city to set aside their decision.

**December 6, 1988:** City Council sets aside approvals for Palm Terrace.

**January 4, 1989:** City sends out Request for Proposals for a new EIR

**July 1989:** EIR is amended to include a full assessment of the impacts of Palm Terrace and Saddleburr, an adjacent property the applicant also wishes to develop.

**August 29, 1989:** Applicant amended and expanded the project by proposing to annex and subdivide the adjacent 32 acre property (Saddleburr).

**November 4, 1989:** Housing cap on five areas (including unincorporated Sebastopol) in the county is recommended.

**April 13, 1990:** Laguna Is For Everyone - (L.I.F.E.) forms to fight Palm Terrace and preserve the Laguna.

**April 24, 1990:** Public hearing of new draft EIR in which 20 speakers and all seven members of the Planning Commission ripped the report and its authors for oversights, omissions, and deficiencies. Nevertheless, draft EIR accepted, a 3-2-1 vote.

**May 3, 1990:** A Press Democrat poll found that 74.6% of the county's voters call the rate of growth "too fast," an increase of 6% over the 68.3% in a similar poll taken in 1988.

**May 10, 1990:** "Sonoma Earth Action" representatives from Sonoma State University send statement of position strongly opposing Palm Terrace/Saddleburr.

**June 6, 1990:** "Citizens to Ensure Comprehensive Planning" files "Notice of Intent" to circulate the Sebastopol Planning Initiative (Measure H on the ballot), a planned growth ballot measure which arose in response largely to Palm Terrace (and Canada Vista, a proposed development on Atascadero Creek). Measure H called for a moratorium on major development while Sebastopol's new General Plan is updated.

With the "introduction" of Indian homeland issues to those of us who fought to preserve this land because of environmental, social, aesthetic and other reasons, the importance of the place becomes even more compelling, more urgent, more focused. How can we, with what we know now, say no to these people wanting their homeland back? How have we arrived at such a place of wrongness that there is even the power to do this? I confess to having lost hope of saving this beautiful place, but as long as the grasses grow instead of concrete, my hope will never entirely vanish. Let us never forget the energy and commitment we gave. We did the right thing.

*Jude Kreissman lives with her family in Sebastopol. She currently is the coordinator for home studies in the Sebastopol Union School District.*

**August 28, 1990:** Public hearing on draft EIR for Palm Terrace and Saddleburr. Nearly every resident of Hutchins Avenue turns out to express dismay and anguish about the proposed developments. EIR approved by City Council, 3-1, with only Anne Magnie dissenting.

Following Measure H's not so enormous defeat in the November election, the City Council forms an Interim Growth Management Committee to create policy for development projects proposed to take place during the General Plan's update. The two ballot authors are on the committee. No real guidelines emerge.

**February 7, 1991:** Revised application filed combining Palm Terrace and Saddleburr into single development, calling for 47 single family lots, 2-4 multifamily units and one office lot.

**March 26, 1991:** Public hearing Petitions "To Save the Laguna from Massive Development" bearing many local signatures are presented.

**April 23, 1991:** Public hearing

**April 30, May 14, May 28, 1991:** Planning Commission receives considerable public comment and testimony.

**May, 1991:** Letter from Terri Shorb, L.I.F.E. activist, to the Sebastopol Planning Commission, citing "...more than 1,200 residents of Sebastopol and environs have affixed their signatures to a strong statement of opposition to the project."

**June 11, 1991:** Planning Commission recommends denial of the project.

**October 13, 1993:** City receives letter from applicants requesting "conditional exceptions to the Subdivision ordinance".

**October 6, 1993:** City planners review project which now has been scaled down from 29 to 19 units.

**January 25, 1994:** Sebastopol Tomorrow issues a "call to action" to citizens to attend the public hearing on Palm Terrace. A well attended hearing produces many reasoned, well researched, thoughtful and moving audience comments opposing Palm Terrace for many reasons. The Planning Commission recommends denial of the project to the cheers of the audience.

**February 8, 1994:** Sebastopol Planning Commission votes 4-3 to recommend denial of a Use Permit and Major Subdivision with exceptions for Palm Terrace.

**March 15, 1994:** Following public hearing on Palm Terrace, the City Council votes 41 to deny the project.

**May 27, 1994:** C.G.Y. Investments files lawsuit against city of Sebastopol stating that the city did not identify adequate findings to support denial of the project.

**July 6, 1994:** Palm Terrace owners said they are willing to go to mediation to settle their \$2 million lawsuit against the city. Because of the Orchard Park lawsuit and the firestorm of negative, inaccurate publicity that accompanied it, Sebastopol finds itself in a weakened position to defend itself against another developer.

**November 1, 1994:** Sebastopol City staff recommends filing an application for Open Space District's matching grant program. This is a program where the Open Space district and cities share the cost of purchasing open space that falls within city boundaries.

**November 15, 1994:** Staff recommends that the city also apply for Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program grant for the Palm Terrace and Saddleburr properties.

**August 8, 1995:** City Council approves "Stipulated Settlement in Order", or settlement of the lawsuit. Requirements for including affordable housing have been eliminated, and some development fees waived.

**September 19, 1995:** City Council will reconsider the Palm Terrace proposal. The settlement states that if the City does not approve a total of 18 units for development by September 19, the lawsuit will resume.

**ALERT!**  
Attend September 5th Meeting  
7:00 pm, Sebastopol Library

**September 5, 1995:** What may be the final chapter of the Palm Terrace saga will be played out in the City Council meeting to hear the results of the city's decision about the lawsuit settlement. Public testimony at this meeting will not be part of the official record. If you have any feeling about the tragedy of Palm Terrace, come to the meeting and make two statements:

■ All public testimony should be ON THE RECORD, so it can be used in future, if necessary.

■ Your opposition to development of this land for anything other than a Native American cultural center.

Your voice is needed. Join us.