

98.28

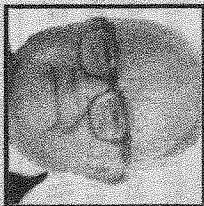
Sonoma West Times & News

May 20-26, 1998

# METES & BOUNDS 98.28

## Are Laguna lovers really?

by Bill Haigwood



If you are looking for a typical Laguna lover, you won't find one. While many see Laguna lovers as a cross between a Berkeley-type hippie and a fantasy-land tree-hugger, the genuine Laguna lover comes in all shapes and persuasions with a wide range of motivations.

Some of the most passionate defenders of Laguna restoration and preservation are motivated by old-fashioned free-enterprise principles. They moved here many years ago and purchased land on or near the Laguna. The land has appreciated in value, as does any scarce commodity, and the owners want to protect their investment. They enjoy the pristine beauty of the wide-open spaces adjacent to their property without the burden of upkeep or taxes. They consider them-

selves fortunate to own a piece of paradise and they are determined to keep it that way for their children.

Then there are the committed defenders, filled with burning idealism and irrefutable logic, who are prepared to throw themselves on the barricades as living sacrifices in behalf of a sacred trust. But before you write them off as a lunatic fringe, consider the very real possibility that they are totally sincere with a passion deeply rooted in their conviction that the Laguna is sacred ground, a living sanctuary that must be preserved and restored.

Those with a more objective and scientific view are concerned with demographic projections of an additional 15 million people in California by the year 2020. To them, the Laguna is a vanishing refuge for plants, birds, animals, fish and other wildlife that are disappearing as the wetlands are drained and filled for development. They recognize that the Laguna is the womb of Mother Nature, and with its destruction will come the end of countless species which can breed and survive in no other environment. To them the interconnectedness of life, from the simplest forms to the most evolved, means that the death of one affects us all, and gives new meaning to John Donne's words: "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

The readers of science fiction share a common bond with those who are deeply spiritual. Both see the restored and preserved Laguna as a place of solace, tranquility and spiritual renewal, an urban oasis in the midst of a frenetic, congested cosmopolitan arena in which the senses constantly are on overload. To them, the Laguna is seen as an antidote to the stress of civilization, an absolutely essential refuge from chaos, a temporary respite from unceasing pressure and a place for restoring one's soul.

Some Laguna lovers are strait-laced Republicans who wear neckties to work and to City Council meetings. Some look like Telegraph Avenue habitués from Berkeley of the '60s. Many are indistinguishable from your next door neighbor, in fact, they are your next door neighbors!

And, while they all look different, they do have one characteristic in common: each one loves the Laguna. Their reasons may vary from person to person, but their end objective is the same: a solid commitment to do whatever is necessary now, and for as long as it takes; because this is our last and only chance to preserve and restore the Laguna — for all the right reasons, and for future generations!

(Bill Haigwood is a Sonoma West Times & News columnist.)