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Sonoma West Times & News

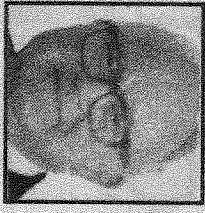
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METES & BOUNDS

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the future

by Bill Haigwood



If you are a typical commuter driving on Highway 12 between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa during the rush hours, your attention is focused on the idiots ahead of you who are engaged in a conspiracy to insure that you don't get home in time for a relaxing glass of white wine before dinner. If, on the other hand, you are one of those who engages in meditation and maintains a spiritual relationship with the Universe, the short distance between the two cities becomes an opportunity to commune with the beauties of nature and the ethereal experience of watching an egret rise majestically from the grass and glide into the heavens — until the self-same idiots slam on their brakes and the rustle of breezes through the grassy expanse is shattered by the sound of shrieking brakes and crashing metal.

As any genuine environmentalist will tell you, it wasn't always this way. Just 150 years ago, you could have crossed the Laguna through lakes, meadows,

forests and herds of deer, elk and other game. You could have watched birds and waterfowl by the hundreds of thousands on the waterways and in the skies. And the only sounds would be the songs of birds, the wind whispering through the trees, the splash of fish and others in the streams and the rustle of grasses beneath your feet.

The challenge today is to restore maximum tranquility to the Laguna with a minimum of hostility and opposition from the present human population. While many environmentalists have expressed a concern for over-population, no one has come up with an effective and socially acceptable means for eliminating the excess.

There is only a finite amount of space available in Sonoma County, but an infinite number of people who want to live here. Since no one has repealed the law of supply and demand, the costs of homes in Sonoma County — and particularly in Sebastopol — continue to rise beyond the reach of most would-be residents. At the same time, the economic pressure is building to open more space for development at the

expense of open space and natural habitat. As a consequence, the cost of acquiring private property on and in the Laguna and restoring it to its original condition also is becoming prohibitively expensive. Those of us who have a dream of a restored and preserved Laguna for future generations must necessarily look to those future generations for the wisdom,

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will and wealth to make it happen. We must start now to educate the public to the vital, irreplaceable role of the Laguna as a nature preserve and wetland's habitat essential to the survival of the species now living there.

Equally important is the preservation of the Laguna as a spiritual sanctuary and tranquil respite for humans from the stress of modern living. Yes, it is a dream — a big dream! But only big dreams can capture the imagination and inspire men and women to make them come true. Now is the time to look back at what the Laguna was and make it a part of the future!

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