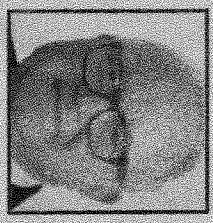


METES & BOUNDS

Gee whiz!

by Bill Haigwood



A man never stands so tall as when a member of his own family says, "I'm proud of you!" And when you live in a town like Sebastopol — a town small enough that most everybody knows everybody else, and the whole community is like an extended family, and that family chooses you to be named "1998 Citizen of the Year," you really stand tall!

Funny, though, the taller I stand, the more humble I feel, knowing that the things for which I am being honored are the result of a lot of effort by many people in the community, including cooperation between disparate and even antagonistic factions who found it possible to work in harmony in a common cause. For instance, it is extremely unlikely that Richard Nichols and I could ever see eye-to-eye on any political issue, even if we stood nose to nose. Yet Richard is the one responsible for persuading the City Council to appoint the Laguna Study Committee more than 10 years ago. Out of that original study committee, headed by Bob Sharp with Kim Cordell serving as chief executive officer, evolved the Laguna de

Santa Rosa Foundation, recipient of the 8.5-acre Laguna Uplands gift from the Chliotti Family. Juliana Doms, publisher of the Environmental Impact Reporter, also was on the other end of the political spectrum — yet turned out to be a hard-working and dedicated co-chair of the Uplands Project Committee which launched the effort to purchase the Laguna Uplands. The community of Sebastopol, an exceptionally diverse and yeasty mix of personalities covering the entire political spectrum, responded magnificently to an accelerated campaign to raise \$1,350,000 in three months. There were collections in local stores, dances and community events and major contributions by local and regional firms and anonymous donors. Even school children got involved, with Mrs. Maguire's 5th grade class holding a bake sale in the downtown plaza and raising some \$500.

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The Open Space District and Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of development rights on the property for \$900,000. When the Laguna Uplands Project Committee was unable to raise the balance of the purchase price, Jim Chliotti, a Santa Rosa contractor, persuaded his cousins to donate the land to the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation. And now, with the generous con-

tribution of \$200,000 by retired contractor Emmett Blynce for the restoration and preservation of the Laguna, the community's goal of a Laguna Park is about to be realized! The Sebastopol Center for the Arts was originally conceived as a magnet to attract visitors and sales tax dollars to maintain essential city services. With the State siphoning off traditional sources of municipal funding, the city rapidly was being squeezed between a rock and a hard place. Noted local artist Duane Jones provided entree to West County's art community, Harvey

Charnofsky underwrote initial operating costs, and Linda Galletta provided the organizational skills and dynamic energy that has made The Sebastopol Center for the Arts one of the best in the state! In both instances, I just happened to get caught on the leading edge of a wave of community energy, fueled by the dreams and aspirations of that unique cosmopolitan collection of individuals who make Sebastopol what it is. Because of who and what you are, I am both honored and humbled to be named Sebastopol's 1998 Citizen of the Year. All I can say is "Gee Whiz!" — and thank you very much!

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