

## Chapter 13

### DEALING WITH GROWTH

Days after the 1990 election the papers gave the impression that a final decision on Dan Palmer's proposals might be forthcoming quickly. Sides had been chosen by Buck McKeon, who favored the proposal, and Jan Heidt and Jill Klajic, who opposed it. I was generally credited with being in favor, and Jo Anne was considered to be on the fence.

However, I was perhaps more "on the fence" than Jo Anne. While going through one draft of the proposal I compiled a list of seventy-seven questions which I felt should be answered in open session before we came to a vote. One of the problems I had with any proposed development was that I had no expertise in how much we could exact from a developer. I wanted to squeeze as hard as we could. Once we had a "final deal" I would be willing to make a decision. I thought staff was probably at a disadvantage also. We had already experienced brain drain when Kaufman and Broad hired Kyle Kollar out from under us.

Palmer's developments were different from the average. Developers got caught often with inventory that was hard to sell. They would acquire property during economic downturns, try to start construction when the market was improving, and then hope the economy would be strong long enough to allow them to sell out of their product while prices were strong. Those who could read the cycle did very well. Once Palmer got caught with a lot of unsold units, and got into the business of leasing. He found that to be very lucrative. Not only could he profit from building, but from the appreciation in prices over a period of years.

However, this meant that Palmer could develop tremendous leverage over a community, and that his developments would be full of people who had no vested interest in our city. I knew that Dan Palmer, who was 26 when I met him, and who later married a billionaire's daughter, was capable of making a billion on his own. I just did not want him to make it all in Santa Clarita.

Dan worked the system as well as anyone. One Sunday he called me, wanting to talk. I invited him over to the house and we sat on the back patio and exchanged ideas. My phone number was in the book, and because I taught full time I had to work on council duties, which probably averaged forty hours a week additional, whenever I could. We talked for some time. I learned a lot about financing in spite of the fact that as an economics teacher I had a better than average grounding in the subject. I learned about Dan's mental processes, and why he had opposed city incorporation so vigorously.

Palmer would do whatever he could to move a project along. His attorney, Douglas Ring, challenged Jan Heidt's right to participate in the decision-making process because her husband was a developer and had an option on some property near to some of Palmer's projects. That soured me on Ring. I had to agree with

Jan Heidt's assessment that once "this kind of sleaze gets started in a city, it's hard to stop and it just destroys the organization because no one trusts anyone else."<sup>1</sup>

Palmer would also use whatever laws he could. If he could not buy good land to develop he would make deals with government to allow development requiring the city to condemn land for access. The law was necessary to allow people to make use of their property without being required to buy their neighbor's land at unconscionably high values. However, I felt Palmer used it to excess, particularly when he worked the process the other way in the case of the "bridge to nowhere." The Whites Canyon bridge to Via Princessa was a county project that was half finished for many months while Palmer made multiple deals on a piece of land in an effort to jack up the assessed value.

Palmer held up the city's attempt to develop Rio Vista Road, and the McCoys held up Palmer's Santa Catarina project. Fortunately Palmer never thought to hire the Hatfields. On April 17, 1990, the council held a hearing on Santa Catarina that went on for four hours. Steve Padilla reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, "By then it was 11:16 p.m. and Darcy turned to her 17-item agenda.

"Let us go on to item two," she said."

Having a newcomer on the council was not helping. We had worked for months in the Planning Commission and at the Council on two zone changes which would benefit the city. We worked on environmental projects, got concessions on roads and trails, and had the developers agree on reducing projects outside the city, and requesting that their lands be annexed into our territory. The school districts signed off on the projects because the developers agreed to the district requests for funding new schools. There was only one person who spoke against the projects, but Jill Klajic voted no.<sup>2</sup>

The developers had come to the city because they could get better service from the hearing process through building inspections, and were willing to make concessions as a result. They could have gone to the county, and gotten more density.

In May Palmer agreed to cut his request for 2,400 units in Santa Catarina to 1,452. There were 149 acres involved, so the project began to make a little sense. Perhaps Palmer could sense he was losing my support. I told Kimberly Heinrichs that the "opposition did a pretty good job. One of the things was the perception that they felt that Canyon Country was getting dumped on. I think that as long as that is a popularly held perception, politically it becomes the truth."<sup>3</sup>

Santa Catarina was not the only issue. In 1989 I had proposed that we change the numbering of street addresses in the city to a system based on Santa Clarita, rather than downtown Los Angeles. I revived the suggestion in May of 1990. No one wanted to listen. Our street numbers made no sense to anyone except the county engineers. I could ask what numbers meant, or whether anyone in the audience knew where 23920 West Valencia Boulevard. None of the general public had a clue that I was giving the address of city hall, the building in which we were meeting. I believed a change was past due. We could change

street numbers in Santa Clarita with a minimum of fuss, and apply a sensible system to the thousands of units that were coming, sooner or later, in the future. One wag suggested in "Tell It to the Signal" that my address be changed to 86. I liked the two-digit number, regardless of the implication.<sup>4</sup>

I knew there was a tremendous amount of time being wasted by merchants giving people directions. Ad space was wasted describing the location of shops. Accidents happened as people were distracted from driving by looking for street numbers on buildings. However, people would rather deal with these problems forever than change the system in a way that they would know the next time they ordered business cards they would have to change the street number. The postal service protested that they would have to retrain everyone at the rate of an hour's training for every sixteen address changes.

Dan Boyle wrote in the *Daily News* on May 31, after the council had voted three to two against referring the problem of house numbers to staff, "Boyer said that he knew his drive to change the home-numbering system was an uphill battle and would not be popular.

No one talked about how the county changed the two and three-digit numbers in Newhall to five digits about forty years before, without any protest.

"I had instructions from my campaign manager to drop it,' Boyer said. 'My wife has told me to drop it.'

"I just think that there's more important things to think about,' Chris Boyer, the councilman's wife, said Wednesday. 'He's very serious about it, but it's turned into a joke.'"<sup>5</sup>

I wanted to make people think about the system, but the outcry was such that it was not worth it. During the debate I reached into my pocket and pulled out a couple of marbles, which I held up to show that I still had them, and my sense of humor. Buck McKeon said that he was doing me a favor by voting against the proposal. "I just saved your political life."<sup>6</sup>

On May 20 the *Daily News* led with the headline, "Sunset Hills cityhood debated." To me the use of the word "debated" in a headline meant that it was a slow news day, and a reporter, in this case Dan Boyle, had to meet a deadline with something. The easiest way to do that was to call the antagonists on some issue which had been on the back burner for some time and get them to answer questions, which might or might not be inflammatory. It did not hurt to go over the pending issues, but I was disappointed that the press found more space for educating the public only on slow news days.

Late in the month I got a letter from Texas warning the City of Santa Clarita that one James Duke Creel had been approved for a parole after serving nineteen years for the kidnapping, rape and murder of a ten-year-old girl. He wanted to live in Saugus. I protested. Sheriff's Captain Bob Spierer said, "I would hate to find out the hard way that a mistake was made to release him." The parole was rescinded largely because of protests from the people of Abilene, but as long as I was in office I wrote a letter annually to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles about the case, and when I retired I made sure my successors were aware of it.<sup>7</sup>

Early in June Andy Martin announced a recall drive against Buck McKeon for being too pro-business and for his support of Santa Catarina. The entire council condemned Martin's move.<sup>8</sup>

Palmer's project came up before the council again. I joined Jo Anne Darcy and Buck McKeon in voting to instruct staff to continue negotiations while Jan Heidt and Jill Klajic voted no. Palmer was down to 1292 units in Santa Catarina and up to \$56.8 million in the amount he proposed to contribute in roads. Of course that figure could be stretched every which way. It might cost a public entity \$56.8 million, but a private developer could be a lot more efficient in holding costs down. The text in one of my graduate courses was *How to Lie with Statistics*.

Jan Heidt gave the majority a tongue-lashing, saying that we threatened the foundation of community activism on which our city was founded. Mayor Darcy responded gently, saying that as mayor, "I cannot do the lashing out that she does."<sup>9</sup>

An effort at team building was mentioned. Andy Martin said he was going to expand his recall effort to include Jo Anne and me. *The Signal* editorialized, calling a recall a "ludicrous venture," and saying, "Grow up SCV residents. Treat your city officials with some respect and try to appreciate the difficulty of the job they are asked to do. If you don't find a better way of communicating your views and wishes, your City Council will become people who will make decisions based on the path of least resistance."<sup>10</sup>

Of course that was exactly what the protestors wanted us to do, but they never stopped to think that control by protest would prevent the city from solving any problems. Many never stopped to think, when they asked why we even listened to Palmer, that we had to listen to any developer who made an application and paid his fees. Nor was I optimistic we could negotiate openly. "You cannot expect a businessman to discuss proprietary information in public."<sup>11</sup>

Mayor Darcy published a well-reasoned essay saying that due process must run its course. "Be assured, however, that if G.H. Palmer Associates cannot meet the city's road, school, environmental and security demands and stay within 1,000 or less unit density, they will be denied by the council." The noise did not diminish. At this point I wanted Palmer to withdraw rather than be voted down, for I was not sure he was not going to waste our time with a law suit.<sup>12</sup>

According to the press Buck McKeon, Jo Anne Darcy and I had received anonymous threats. I vaguely remember turning a couple of letters over to the Sheriff's Department, but did not take them seriously. However, when Palmer came to the council on July 24 with a proposal for 800 units in Santa Catarina without adequate roads the council voted four to one to end the matter. I voted against this move, thinking that we should continue negotiations.<sup>13</sup>

We went into recess and a Canyon Country resident, Brad Ambler, served me with a recall notice, which I got to take home to my wife on the eve of her birthday. The irony of it was that the recall committee accused me of being inaccessible. This was the same Brad Ambler who wrote a letter to the editor pre-

viously saying how good it was that I had reached out to the opposition and visited them in his home. With the recall people criticizing me for holding a secret meeting with Dan Palmer, I answered Kimberly Heinrichs' question about the details of the meeting. "No one ever asked me what went on at that meeting. Dan Palmer called me up on the phone and was basically saying, 'I'm going to give up. I want to close this deal down. I want to forget about the Rio Vista right-of-way.'" It was Sunday and I said, 'Dan, why don't you come up to the house?' and he came and the whole conversation was 'Hold on. Let the process run its course.'"<sup>14</sup>

I asked the Council for its support against the recall, but Jan Heidt and Jill Klajic failed to give it. It was not until much later, when slow growther John Drew made a slip of the tongue, that I was sure that Klajic was in on it, and that Heidt was sympathetic. I responded to the recall notice with an optional rebuttal pointing out that the proponents had not alleged any wrongdoing. John O'Dwyer, Carmel Sizer and Gary Vreeland joined Brad Ambler's effort publicly.<sup>15</sup>

The recall group managed to "Tell It to the Signal" on August 27, "For the person who gives their whole support to Carl Boyer: Obviously this person has not been following Councilman Boyer's history in this valley, because he's been voted out on every re-election on every position he has held in this valley including the Hart school board, the Castaic Water Agency, and College of the Canyons..." This really bothered me. I did not expect them to have overwhelming regard for the truth. I had never run for the Hart board, let alone for reelection. I had won reelection to a second term on the college board by a majority in a six-way race in which I did not campaign. I had won the balance of a full term on the water board. What hurt was that *The Signal* consistently published this kind of garbage, submitted anonymously, over a long period of time without any editorial correction of the facts.<sup>16</sup>

I went to talk with Joe Franco and John Green at *The Signal* many months later. I made it clear that I supported freedom of the press, and understood the value of printing ideas of people who spoke anonymously, for that way we could learn a lot about what people on the street were thinking. However, my argument that misstatements of fact should be corrected by editorial remarks fell on deaf ears.

On my birthday I got to read about the recall group beginning to circulate petitions. I never saw any evidence it.<sup>17</sup>

Four weeks later Brad Ambler called and asked if I would be willing to bury the hatchet. Apparently he did not have much support. He was aware that my term as Mayor was coming soon.<sup>18</sup>

However, the story in *The Signal* the next day was that the recall was on, and Brad had rejoined the movement. Cam Noltemeyer, a resident who had served an unhappy term on the San Fernando City Council and failed in her reelection bid, and John Simas joined the list of spokespeople for the petition campaign. I ignored the effort, and then forgot about it. In early January there was a story that Brad Ambler was in trouble for having failed to register as a sex offender; he said

that resulted from being caught skinny dipping more than twenty years before. On January 31, 1991, the *Daily News* ran a story that they had missed the filing deadline.<sup>19</sup>

One of the joys of being a city councilman was dealing with complaints about the cable television service. The County of Los Angeles had given out fifteen-year franchises just before incorporation, so there was nothing we could do about changing the service in the near term. There were times we did not like living with the situation any more than the customers; indeed we were customers, unlike the county supervisors. King Videocable, a predecessor of AT&T Broadband (which was bought by Comcast, and then later by Time Warner), was busy revamping their system, which involved putting ugly foot-high green boxes in a lot of front yards. When Linda Rodgers of Valencia complained to me I called the company. It took me five days to complete the call. When I mentioned it to Dan Boyle, Shirley Aronson, who was King's general manager, was upset. She accused me of exaggerating, saying that I only had to play phone tag with Lee Arnold, their district engineer, for one day. Heck, I do not mind playing phone tag. It was the five days that their phone rang and rang and rang that bothered me, and I knew there were thousands of newspaper readers who knew exactly what I was talking about, regardless of what Shirley Aronson said. Indeed, I hated to see her comment on it at all, because she was a hard working person who was very involved in the community.<sup>20</sup>

Editorially, John Green said that "we need council members who can both disagree and argue viewpoints effectively without going solo...."

This latter ability can be seen in Buck McKeon, who is logical, consistent and unemotional; Jo Anne Darcy, who is flexible but cautious; Carl Boyer, who is influential yet sometimes inconsistent, and Jan Heidt, who often disagrees with fellow council members but who has managed to bring about consensus [*sic*].

The same cannot be said of Jill Klajic, the council's newest member and the one who most often finds herself on the short end of the vote, whether it be from true conviction or a feeling that to do otherwise would disappoint her supporters....

Klajic and her camp possess some valid proposals aimed at improving the quality of life in the city and the rest of the Santa Clarita Valley.

Clearly, she has visible public support and some good ideas.

But they don't stand a chance unless she is able to work with the others, adhere to certain ground rules and possess the persuasiveness to bring about consensus for her ideas.<sup>21</sup>

That was published the day after the council held a team building retreat in Oxnard. The idea was to get away from city hall and meet only with George Carvalho, who would take us through the exercise, which was supposed to help us to learn to work together. However, reporters showed up. We each talked about priorities. I was keen on educating the public, and getting them to look at

issues with a broader prospective. Jo Anne wanted to foster civic pride, and encourage “untraditional” housing, such as loft apartments in commercial buildings. Buck McKeon suggested that staff training with emphasis on service, and a city hall, were important. Jan Heidt was concerned about the impact of new commercial development on small business. Jill Klajic wanted to concentrate on growth management. McKeon asked her what limit she wanted on residential construction. She was not prepared to answer that question, but finally agreed that five hundred annually might work. “That’s more than we have now,” McKeon said. Indeed the actual number was less than two hundred.<sup>22</sup>

As Jill Klajic’s allies talked about a growth limitation initiative, the city’s more practical efforts in that direction went down the drain. Gary Cusumano, then the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Newhall Land and Farming, cited “a considerable amount of unrest in the community” and the recall movement as the partnership’s reason for refusing to annex land west of I-5 to the city. It was one thing to talk with developers about superior planning and service provided by the city as a good tradeoff for annexation. We could certainly argue Santa Clarita quality in the place of county high density. However, the developers were beginning to wonder what was going to happen next.<sup>23</sup>

Rio Vista Road was planned to move traffic from upper Bouquet Canyon to the Antelope Valley Freeway. Dennis Koontz had pushed for a solution the serious bottlenecks at Bouquet Junction and along San Fernando Road, which was then a two-lane highway. The idea was to build Rio Vista almost parallel to San Fernando, but intersecting with the freeway at Placerita Canyon.

Vera Johnson became the spokesperson for the Santa Clarita Citizens Transportation Committee. Her constant cohort in this activity was Jack Ancona, an activist who loved to draw maps of proposed roads. I spent more than one day in the field looking at routes Jack proposed. They never met the state standards for grades and radii, but he worked hard on them and I got some good exercise hiking in the hills checking on his offerings. When Jack was stricken with cancer we gave him a nice plaque honoring his activities as a gadfly. Several complained we should not have encouraged him, but personally I liked the guy, and I knew that many cities suffered with much worse.

Vera’s group wanted us to plunge right through the hills from Saugus to the freeway. She galvanized opposition to Rio Vista, and although it was feasible financially, the plan died slowly. San Fernando Road was widened eventually (and was later renamed Newhall Avenue, Main Street and Railroad Avenue). Bouquet Junction was improved. By the time we were able to actually plunge through the hills it was 2001, and it was not until the next year that the city could begin developing a route directly to the freeway. Commute times were getting longer.

CARRING was the slow growth group. The Citizens Association for a Responsible Residential Initiative on Growth involved Ed Dunn, Bob Lathrop, Jack Matukas and John Drew. I was concerned that CARRING was creating problems for the city’s efforts to annex lands and gain the confidence of LAFCO

so that we could eventually gain an award of a sphere of influence. I proposed that the city hire two consultants, one to be selected by the council and the other by CARRING, to study possible growth management ordinances and ballot measures. I believed that initiatives were generally drawn sloppily, as had been the case with Proposition P, and that having consultants develop the initiative in a public process might develop the kind of debate which would point out the flaws in advance.<sup>24</sup>

No initiative was necessary. The big growth in the valley was the result of people building either from rights they had gained from the county prior to incorporation, or outside the city limits. More than once I had suggested in council meetings that we should post signs at the city limits reading, "*ACHTUNG. Sie verlassen jetzt den Santa Claritischen sektor.*" So many people would have complained they could not read the signs that they would have become a big issue, and everyone would have finally gotten the point.

Dan Hon, a local attorney who I met in 1967 when he lived briefly in Del Prado, and who was chairman of the Canyon County Formation Committee, was also a columnist for *The Signal*. His column on August 14, 1990 recounted a little history. "I talked about the possibility of a new county and Assemblyman Knox asked me how we expected to pay for it. I hadn't the foggiest notion and turned to Carl. He took a deep breath, talked steadily for five minutes in finanzielleze and sat down.

"About a year later, in 1974, the 'Knox Bill' permitting the formation of new counties in the state was enacted and Canyon County was off and running....

"It was, in the opinion of all of us, including Carl, our last chance to plan for the huge population increase in some logical fashion."

Had the people of the remainder of Los Angeles County voted with us, we would have had the entire Santa Clarita Valley under one jurisdiction, and we could indeed have managed reasonable growth.

On August 14 the council passed the formal rejection of the Palmer proposal, four to nothing. I missed the vote. I was in Salt Lake City that evening, tending to my long-neglected publishing business.

However, I soon found out it did not pay to miss a council meeting. Buck McKeon called me at my hotel the next day, and asked me to meet him at his hotel room. He had flown to Utah for a meeting of the Board of Trustees of Brigham Young University. When we met he told me that the council had fired my appointee to the Parks Commission and replaced her with George Stigile.

Originally, each council member appointed someone to each commission, and the full council ratified these appointments. Then it was decided that we should each consider the merits of each applicant. Each member would rate each applicant on a scale of zero to five. Those scoring highest would be appointed. We had rated the applicants, but the scores were not made public until the council meeting. Laurene Weste had scored sixteen points out of twenty-five. George Stigile had scored twenty-two, and so was given the appointment by a unanimous vote because all council members followed the new system.



However, as McKeon thought about it, he realized that Laurene had gotten three high scores and two extremely low scores, a one and a zero. He was upset. I said that what the council had done could be fixed. Because the vote was unanimous any member who had voted could move to reconsider. Later we declared George Stigile's seat vacant, and we reappointed Laurene Weste on a three-to-two vote. No longer would a council minority be able to sabotage an outstanding candidate.<sup>25</sup>

George Stigile applied later, was appointed with the support of the entire council, and, according to Laurene Weste, did an outstanding job. The rating system was scrapped, in part because of Brown Act objections.

We remained at odds with the County of Los Angeles. Late in August I proposed that we take a proposal to break up Los Angeles County to the California Contract Cities Association, in which I was increasingly active. I did not like being a part of the largest county in the nation, which had a population larger than thirty-nine states at that time. I did not believe that a single county supervisor should have a constituency of a million and one-half people (and more than 1,900,000 by 2005), a number larger than any congressman or state legislator. In my mind the issue was BIG government, and the fact that once a supervisor was elected he became so well entrenched that he served as long as he liked. It should not take a multi-million dollar campaign to run for county office.<sup>26</sup>

When Los Angeles County was formed in 1850 it stretched to what was then New Mexico Territory, and contained 3,530 people. For almost forty years it was trimmed regularly, but since the formation of Orange County in the 1880s no adjustments had been made, and now it is larger in population than many countries. However, when the issue came to the Council, it was postponed. Jo Anne Darcy argued that it was not timely because of an unresolved voting rights suit. Someone was arguing that a Hispanic could not get elected. This was not true, as proved by Sarah Flores, a conservative, having won a supervisorial race for the seat of the retiring Pete Schabarum. However, her election was set aside, the districts were redrawn, and Gloria Molina, a liberal, won the seat. Ultimately we passed a resolution, with Jo Anne Darcy dissenting because it would damage our relationship with the county. Jill Klajic said, "I don't think we have a relationship with the county." Indeed we did not, but neither were we trying to build one. I am certain that staff shuddered when we had these public discussions, but they too had a hard time being sympathetic to ignorant county officials. Mike Antonovich responded with his assessment of my effort. "It makes as much sense as putting an Edsel dealership on Three Mile Island."<sup>27</sup>

I would never have dismissed Mike Antonovich that way. I simply thought that no one could do a good job representing a county constituency, at the time, of over a million seven hundred thousand people.

The county also had no understanding of the growth problems in the Santa Clarita Valley. They wanted to promote growth in the unincorporated area. We knew that the growth should go into the city; the reason should have been obvious

to any planner. If the county did not encourage growth outside the city, the developers would have to negotiate with us, and we could exact road and school improvements from them. Under county policy, any growth in the rural area came without much in the way of exactions, and the traffic dumped into the city. Indeed the city had to sue on several occasions to require developers building in the county to solve of the basic traffic problems they were generating.<sup>28</sup>

At the end of August we instituted a policy of allowing a prayer to open a council meeting. I was uncomfortable with the idea, but coming out against it was not worth the controversy that would have ensued. A couple of times I was asked for a slot by a minister, but I soon decided that when it was my turn I would simply call for a moment of silent contemplation. I was, however, very glad to participate in the first annual Santa Clarita Community Interfaith Thanksgiving Service later in the year.

A few weeks later we finally got a break in an effort to solve some of our traffic problems. George Carvalho and Ken Pulskamp had been pushing on all fronts to find some money to build some roads. They were masters at putting together pieces to finish a puzzle, but in spite of our having a lot of money in the bank a \$21 million project for the widening of San Fernando Road was big. We had a proposal before the California Transportation Commission for \$7.3 million in state funding. I went to Sacramento to testify on behalf of the city. It took five hours for my turn to speak to come up. I had a couple of minutes. However, I had spent the five hours listening carefully to the debate, and realized that the commissioners were most upset about state money being set aside for projects that were not ready to be built.

I made the pitch that we were ready, that we would put the money to work instead of letting it sit in the bank. We got that \$7.3 and more. I learned a few things. First, George and Ken knew what they were talking about when they suggested having plans on the shelf, ready to go. Second, it pays to concentrate on making a few good points in a few seconds, rather than wasting all the given time hearing yourself speak. Make your pitch and sit down while the board is still listening. Linda Bohlinger, who worked for the county's capital planning and projects office, said, "Never, ever in my 10 years has the state agreed to amend a transportation improvement plan that soon."<sup>29</sup>

As the November election approached we began to pay close attention to the one city issue on the ballot, the annexation of Pinetree, Timberlane and Le House tracts in eastern Canyon Country. Ruth Benell had drawn this area out of the original city limits although a majority of the voters in the area had signed the cityhood petition. We pushed hard for annexation and were somewhat stunned when some local Libertarians were successful in getting enough people to sign a petition to put it on the ballot. Informal polls taken by residents, mentioned in *The Signal*, indicated a close election result.

One of the issues was taxation. We worked hard to present the truth, that being in the city would not mean a tax increase but would mean better representation. Bruce Bell, John Hassel and Randy Pfeister raised questions. In

answer to one, Buck McKeon said that we had pushed for annexation because “We just assumed people wanted in.”

John Hassel retorted, “That’s like asking Kuwait if they wanted to be next to Iraq.” We did win the election by a very narrow margin, and scored points with the residents by solving their road problems very quickly.<sup>30</sup>

Late in October I realized that the written policy on mayoral rotation was different than the policy we had directed staff to write. Our direction was to put newly elected councilmembers at the bottom of the rotation, to give them an opportunity for seasoning before they would become mayor. The written policy allowed a newly elected member to move into the office very quickly. I wanted to clarify the policy, but Jill Klajic insisted that I was trying to hurt her chances of becoming mayor. I offered to make the clarification effective after she had a turn as mayor. The last thing I wanted to do was make a martyr out of Jill Klajic. We never did deal with the issue, and in 1988, when I retired and several new councilmembers were elected, the council suspended rotation for a year, electing Jo Anne Darcy to a second consecutive term.<sup>31</sup>

By mid-November problems with the development of our general plan surfaced. Any new city in California is required to develop its own general plan within a reasonable time. Santa Clarita, as the “largest newly incorporated city in the history of humankind,” had a big task to do. However, every city does what is most efficient when it has a big job to do and does not want to hire permanent staff to do it. They contract the work out to consultants. While consultants cannot be hired cheaply, they provide expertise where it is needed on a temporary basis, and when they are gone there are no residual costs. City planners Chris Trinkley, who had worked hard for incorporation, and Dave Hogan were also involved. Lynn Harris was on board as our third community development director.

Perhaps a major problem with the general plan work was the size of our General Plan Advisory Committee, twenty-four people from both the city and the surrounding area, chosen to represent a cross section of both our geography and economy. Whether developers or housewives, they were chosen carefully. Ralph Killmeyer was their able chairman. However, after a period of months attendance began to fall off, and a quorum became hard to reach at some meetings. It would seem that the value of the input from each member was not considered high enough to encourage regular attendance.

Another problem was the lack of a clear outline of the responsibilities of the committee and of the consultants. Councilmembers were expected to stay away from the committee meetings, so we were not aware of the problems until we heard from members or consultants. Our original consulting firm was Phillips Brandt Reddick, but when they reorganized in 1989 we hired Michael Brandman and Associates. Then Kunzman and Associates, a subcontractor for MBA, suffered the loss of the two employees who were working on the Santa Clarita traffic model. On August 22 the meeting was adjourned “in frustration” after Barry Hogan, who became involved late in the process, of MBA told the commit-

tee members present that his firm had the final say on recommendations to the council.<sup>32</sup>

While these problems were surfacing, Scott Voltz organized Santa Clarita Residents for Responsible Planning as a response to CARRING. Jill Klajic added more fuel to the fire by signing an antagonistic letter to *The Signal*, which was published November 28.

In the meantime the County of Los Angeles was discussing their new General Plan behind closed doors with developers, who had submitted requests to add 24,000 homes in the Santa Clarita Valley. In addition, John Drew, chairman of CARRING, surfaced a proposal to limit Santa Clarita's growth to 475 units a year. According to Drew the actual growth rate since incorporation was 680 units per year, but that figure included the buildout of a significant number of developments which had been approved by the county prior to incorporation.<sup>33</sup>

Of course the growth problems were not the only things on the minds of the city's council and staff. The Pacific American Ballet Company was preparing a production of *The Nutcracker*, and succeeded in recruiting a lot of the local community leaders to perform in the first act party scene. We attended a number of rehearsals and worked hard to learn our steps. I had seen *The Nutcracker* many times. Daughter Denise enjoyed performing many different roles in the ballet over the years, including the part of Clara in one extraordinary production by the Westside Ballet, and had performed in a San Diego Ballet version that same year, sharing the spotlight with Valery and Galina Panov.<sup>34</sup>

I wanted to do well, and enjoyed the benefit of having Carmen Sarro as a partner. She helped me to avoid total disgrace during my first week as Mayor. Pat McKeon, Sheila Veloz, Stacy Kessler, Dick Smykle, Alan Barbakow, Jan Heidt, Maureen Focht, Diane Benjamin, Lou Klajic, Jim Lentini, Michael Marks, John Pick and John Stone joined us. Some of these people were ringers. At least one had danced professionally in New York, and one had sung with the Metropolitan Opera. Carmen and I enjoyed being the "parents" of two great kids whose names I wish I could remember, a boy and a girl, both preteens. I was so glad I was not mentioned in the reviews.

We nominated Jan Heidt for an alternate seat on the Board of the Local Agency Formation Commission. Former Compton Mayor Walter Tucker had died, leaving a vacancy. His successor was to be elected by the City Selection Committee, which was comprised of the mayors of the cities in Los Angeles County, or their designated representatives. The City Selection Committee always met in conjunction with the monthly meetings of the Los Angeles County Division of the League of California Cities, which I attended as the representative of Santa Clarita, the eighty-fifth city. Jan Heidt was campaigning at a disadvantage in that none of us were well known in the county. Garth Gardner, a crusty old councilman from Pico Rivera won with twenty-nine votes, and Glendora Mayor Bob Kuhn was second with eighteen. Jan received nine votes, including that of Judy Hathaway-Francis of La Habra Heights, the president of the California Contract Cities Association.

If Jan had won the seat it would have made a big difference to Santa Clarita, but our young city was at a disadvantage in taking on the “old boy” network. As it was, she had at least been appointed to the Congestion Management Plan Policy Advisory Committee of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission. Participation in such committees was the way to become better known. It was disappointing that the general public did not know of the tremendous efforts all the members of the council were making to become more involved in regional and state policy making.<sup>35</sup>

On December 7 a brainstorming session, conducted by Allan and Karen Cameron of SCOPE, was held in a Canyon Country church. With the exception of Allan Cameron, developers and their representatives were not welcome at the session. During the session I was “removed from office,” and “Jill Klajic, for one, could barely conceal her enthusiasm” at this result. However, John Green concluded his writeup on the exercise with “such sessions will accomplish little if they are allowed to become just another convenient vehicle for special interest groups – or for a politician, especially one who has made it clear that she won’t tolerate certain segments of this valley’s population.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The Signal*, April 19, 1990.

<sup>2</sup>*The Signal*, April 26, 1990.

<sup>3</sup>*Daily News*, May 6, 1990.

<sup>4</sup>*Daily News*, May 12, 1990, and *The Signal*, May 28, 1990.

<sup>5</sup>*Daily News*, May 31, 1990.

<sup>6</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1990.

<sup>7</sup>*Daily News*, May 30, 1990.

<sup>8</sup>*The Signal*, June 6, 1990.

<sup>9</sup>*The Signal*, June 15, 1990.

<sup>10</sup>*The Signal*, June 17, 1990.

<sup>11</sup>*The Signal*, June 28, 1990.

<sup>12</sup>*The Signal*, July 1, 1990.

<sup>13</sup>*The Signal*, July 25, 1990; *Daily News*, July 25, 1990, and *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1990.

<sup>14</sup>*Daily News*, July 26, 1990.

<sup>15</sup>*Daily News*, August 7, 1990; *The Signal*, August 7 and 11-12, 1990.

<sup>16</sup>*The Signal*, August 27, 1990.

<sup>17</sup>*Daily News*, Sept. 22, 1990.

<sup>18</sup>*The Signal*, Oct. 17, 1990.

<sup>19</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 8, 1991.

<sup>20</sup>*Daily News*, July 28, 1990.

<sup>21</sup>*The Signal*, July 29, 1990.

<sup>22</sup>*Daily News*, July 29, 1990.

<sup>23</sup>*The Signal*, July 30, 1990.

<sup>24</sup>*The Signal*, August 2, 1990.

<sup>25</sup>*Daily News*, August 16, 18-20 and 25, 1990, and *The Signal*, August 16-18, 21 and 25, 1990.

<sup>26</sup>*The Signal*, August 26, 1990.

<sup>27</sup>*Daily News*, Sept. 27-28, 1990.

<sup>28</sup>*Daily News*, August 28, 1990.

<sup>29</sup>*Daily News*, Sept. 22, 1990.

<sup>30</sup>*Daily News*, Oct. 13, 1990.

<sup>31</sup>*Daily News*, Nov. 1, 1990, and *The Signal*, Nov. 1-2, 1990.

<sup>32</sup>*Daily News*, Nov. 19, 1990.

<sup>33</sup>*Daily News*, Nov. 24, 1990.

<sup>34</sup>*The Signal*, Dec. 6, 1990.

<sup>35</sup>*Daily News*, Dec. 7-8, 1990, and *The Signal*, Dec. 8, 1990.

<sup>36</sup>*The Signal*, Dec. 9, 1990.