

## Chapter 4

### REPRESENTING THE VALLEY

From the time in 1969 when Jon Newhall raised the idea of city government, those of us involved in the quest worked to solve the problems caused by its absence, while at the same time trying to bring our dreams to fruition. It took tremendous effort.

The issues included the schools, flood control, growth, formation of the Newhall-Saugus-Valencia Federation of Homeowner Associations, billboards, public transportation, forming CIVIC, county formation, high taxes, dissolving the local Resource Conservation District, celebrating our centennial, and forming an historical society to develop a sense of the heritage of our valley.

The battle between the Board of Trustees of the William S. Hart Union High School District and its Superintendent, Collins T. Haan, with the subsequent recall of two board members, was the big news story for much of 1970. Jon Newhall played up the story in *The Signal* on Friday, February 6. At the board meeting at the end of January, Superintendent Haan had been told to fire Donald Jerry, the principal of Canyon High School, who was taking heat because of anti-war demonstrations on campus. C.T. refused, saying the board had to give specific reasons for Jerry to be fired.<sup>1</sup>

On Monday the story was headlined above the masthead in seventy-two-point type. Curtis Huntsinger, Edward Duarte, David Holden and Stanley Wright had demanded that Haan resign. Only E.J. Agajanian had supported Haan's stand that specific allegations had to be made against Donald Jerry, and insisted that Haan's firing had to be on specific grounds. Haan was in the eighth month of a four-year contract, and said he would not quit.

Seventy people had met in the Sand Canyon home of Richard and Lois Kling, and Charles S. Dyer, administrator of the Inter-Valley Community Hospital in Golden Valley and our honorary mayor, represented that group in presenting questions, in writing, to the board on February 9. *The Signal* published an editorial calling for courtesy and open discussion. The February 10th meeting drew a crowd of over 400, many of whom arrived on time to find that Curtis Huntsinger had called the board into session half an hour early.

Huntsinger foolishly picked a fight with the press, insisting that Jon Newhall's tape recorder be unplugged. County counsel John Wagner evaded the issue of a right to make a public record by stating that Newhall's demand that the order to unplug the tape recorder be placed in the minutes was out of order, and a volunteer from the audience unplugged the recorder. The meeting was adjourned to the Hart Auditorium after Wagner advised the board they could not discuss personnel policies in public. However, the public gathered there did not know until 10:00 p.m. that the meeting had begun before the move to the auditorium and that the board had decided already that Haan's case would not be discussed. So much for courtesy and open discussion.<sup>2</sup>

The teachers and their students were probably responsible for the sixty-two per cent of the public being aware of the problems in the district. A Signal poll reported on February 23 indicated 75% of the public supported C.T. Haan, who had already been a speaker at the Santa Clarita United Methodist Church, which Chris and I attended at the time. Curtis Huntsinger's said two weeks later, in the same venue, that each morning he asked God for direction.

Jon Newhall put me in touch with some other people when I inquired about progress on a settlement of the issues, and about forty of us met in Del Prado's clubhouse on March 1. A broad segment of the community attended, and Charles Dyer said it was time to throw in the towel on mediation. Don Jerry's opinions had been printed in *The Signal*, and his point that Canyon High School had had three principals in two years was telling. The March 1 meeting ended with agreement that a recall was necessary.<sup>3</sup>

On March 5 the board fired C.T. Haan for an unspecified breach of contract. Because of the law regarding personnel actions, none of the board members could talk about it, although the newspaper speculated that this was the board's way of cutting Haan from his \$26,500 salary. Only C.T. Haan could waive his rights and allow the board to talk. Only some of us understood that, but the board's lack of courtesy to the general public was understood by all. Don Jerry had somehow returned to the good graces of the board. Only E.J. Agajanian was not involved in the mess.

On March 8 forty-five members of the newly-formed School Rescue Committee met, and on March 11 we published a list of our leaders. Tom Hanson, a consulting aeronautical engineer of Newhall, and Ken Kreyenhagen of Saugus (Sand Canyon) were co-chairmen, and Andy Miliotis of Pinetree in Saugus was treasurer. Daniel Anderson and I of Newhall, Ray Cooper of Sierra Hills, Jerry Jones of Valencia and Lois Kling of Sand Canyon were listed. Rounding out the group were Kevin Lynch of Mint Canyon, and Kathryn Morrison, Tom Royston, Harry Wilkerson and Dr. Carroll Word of Saugus, which included Canyon Country and Sand Canyon at the time.<sup>4</sup>

By March 8 I had canvassed my area with the recall petition. I had a two-year-old precinct list from which to work my condominium, Del Prado. Of the 140 names on the list, 71 had moved or died. I reached thirty-three of the remainder, and twelve said they knew about the problems in the Hart District and wanted to sign the recall. I said to the others that I would get back to them as soon as they had a chance to become informed.

On March 13 *The Signal* reported that C.T. Haan was going to sue the District, and the California Teachers Association was soon involved. However, at the end of the month, only half the people knew a recall was underway. With a 100% turnover of top district administrators in a year something had to be done. Dr. Lester Hiebert, the district administrator with the most seniority, had been there almost a year. We had to have concrete information on which to campaign. The elementary districts were studying a reorganization plan that would eliminate the Hart District. On May 14, 1970, Chris Mathison, who was a teacher at Arroyo

Seco Junior High in Saugus, wrote that the entire board must resign, and asked for an economic boycott against their businesses.<sup>5</sup>

The campaign to gather signatures was completed quickly. Tom Hanson had put a tremendous amount of effort into it, and by June 19 he and Ken Kreyenhagen circulated a letter to 150 people who worked on the recall. They said that an election would be called very soon. Then it would be time to work on the election campaign. Late in July about a dozen of us met in a private home to caucus on the question of who would run to replace Curtis Huntsinger and Ed Duarte. Tom Hanson wanted to run. At first no one else stepped forward. I wanted to, but did not feel I should. As a high school teacher I did not want to serve on a high school district board. Then Carroll Word, the minister at Santa Clarita United Methodist Church, threw his hat in the ring. He asked me to look at the depositions taken by C.T. Haan's attorney from the four board members who had supported Haan's dismissal.

By this time it appeared that the Hart Board would have to settle with C.T. Haan for a substantial amount of money. The depositions revealed how poorly the board had performed. Ed Duarte supported Huntsinger's request that Don Jerry be fired, and then talked to Mr. Jerry and decided there was no reason to fire him. Although C.T. Haan had said in February that he would resign if the board took a vote of no confidence in him, the board never did take a vote. The board did not ask him to resign before they fired him on March 5. The four board members could not agree on any grounds for charging Haan with insubordination. They had charged unprofessional conduct without knowing the facts, except that Haan had "walked out" of a board meeting on October 13 [*sic*], 1969, when demonstrations at Canyon High School were discussed. The board had made charges of fraud, saying that Dr. Mel Ross allegedly stole some books from the district and that C.T. Haan did not report the theft. However, the board acted on rumors without asking anyone about the facts.

The board members were very confused about the charge that Haan had failed to follow direction of the board. It had been said that some students had attended the musical, *Hair*. The board had asked for a report, but did not get one immediately. They did not follow up on it.

Failure to perform duties was charged. Wright had asked for a copy of the architect's contract but had not received one. Huntsinger said that Haan had not posted meetings properly, but then admitted that only one had not been posted and this was not Haan's fault.

Failure to report pertinent information to the board was charged, in that Haan had failed to report a drunk administrator to the board. However, after Haan was fired this administrator was one of the *troika* put in charge of the district until Dave Baker was hired to take over.

I wondered if the board had followed up on instructions, and whether the board agendas brought up old business properly. Could C.T. Haan be expected to recall all that was asked of him offhand? Could the board have handled getting Haan to leave in a better way?

In August I talked to Mr. Haan at length, asking him a lot of questions, and sent a summary to Tom Hanson. I found out that the top eleven administrators had held their jobs for less than two years. Only two assistant principals had more than two years on the job. He believed the charges of insubordination were over an ungraded program at Canyon High School, which was put into effect a few weeks after the plans had been reported to the board, which had given no feedback to him. When he was asked to make a report to the board, he had Don Jerry take care of it, and considered the matter closed when Jerry wrote to the board.

When Haan left the board meeting on October 14, the agenda was completed, Mr. Huntsinger had the floor and was fielding questions from the audience. It had been a five-hour session. Only adjournment remained. Haan was upset, and felt it necessary to leave. Policies were drawn up as requested. One took three months to develop due to correspondence with other districts. When Mr. Huntsinger requested that several policies be reviewed, reports were ready for the next board meeting, but turmoil postponed the presentations.

The board criticized Haan for writing articles for *The Signal*, which he had done as the result of a comment by Mr. Holden that the district was not doing enough to communicate with the public. Nothing was said about the articles, which were silent on any local controversy, until charges were made. In the depositions one objection was that they were written for an unfriendly newspaper. Publication in the *Los Angeles Times* would have been okay.

Dr. Ross had borrowed seven law books with the permission of Ray Peterson, the Director of Transportation. A revered and retired board member, Jereann Bowman, verified Dr. Ross' account of the books.

Some "computers" turned out to be desk calculators which a Palmdale firm had lent to the district without the knowledge of the board or the superintendent. Ed Duarte criticized Haan because the superintendent had no knowledge of an item that had been raised without having been put on the agenda.

A public flap about students going to see *Hair* arose when during a discussion in Mrs. Sorenson's class someone interjected, "Let's go see *Hair*!" The kids laughed and forgot the comment, except one who said to a parent that students were going to see the show. The parent complained to a board member. Mr. Haan knew nothing of the incident until the board cited a student trip to see *Hair* as one reason for asking him to resign.

Concerning the architect's contract, Haan asked Lester Hiebert to make photocopies and this took a month. Had Wright said something about his policy book being incomplete, he would have been told that the index was a standard form purchased outside the district, and that if a form was missing that simply meant there was no district policy on that matter.

Haan's predecessor had attempted to fill the gaps in the policy manual, but Haan had not pushed completion because the board did not do its homework and was unprepared to adopt policies. [Not all policies need to be adopted by each district.]

Haan did not relate an incident concerning drunkenness to the board because the person in charge of the meeting in the Antelope Valley said that Don Sherlock did not appear to be drunk.

The campaign was reduced to the board voting four to one, with Aggie Agajanian protesting, to pay C.T. Haan \$40,000 to settle out of court, and the lack of competence of four board members. Six candidates ran for the seats to be declared vacant if the recall itself was successful, with David Clasby, Michael Ball, Lawrence Holtzworth and Ronald Karp joining Hanson and Word in the campaign as candidates that *The Signal* endorsed as suitable.

The election was close, and had been a cliffhanger until the last precinct came in. The incumbents led by about thirty votes until Sand Canyon's returns defeated them, with Ed Duarte recalled by a margin of 2472 to 2320, and Curt Huntsinger, who was in the middle of his tenth year in office, recalled by 2450 to 2323. Word and Hanson won easily. The voter turnout was 25.7% of the 18,329 registered voters. Dr. Word received 2185 votes and Clasby and Charles M. Sanchez received 229 and 215, respectively, for Duarte's seat. Hanson garnered 1934 votes. Marie G. McAfee got 442, and the rest shared 591 votes.<sup>6</sup>

One thing our election victory did was to allow C.T. Haan to resume his career. It was easier to have a firing on his resume if the voters backed him.

Unification of the valley's school districts never gained significant support, and eventually the cause was forgotten. Dave Baker, the superintendent hired by the Hart Board in 1970, and King Wisdom, the president of the teacher's association, asked me to run for the board. I turned them down. Tom Hanson and Carroll Word had had their difficulties as board members, and I was a little disillusioned. I still felt that a high school teacher should not serve on a high school board.

Some years later I heard someone suggest that the recall election had marked the passing of power from the Old Guard.

Turning my energies back to the problems of general government, in 1971 I did a detailed study of the publication, *Tax Rates by Code Areas*, breaking down each unincorporated area and city. The City of Commerce enjoyed the lowest tax rate of \$8.5425 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The county tax on a \$24,000 house with an assessed value of \$6,000 was \$245.29 in all areas. In Commerce the school tax was \$227.61, and there was no city property tax. Special districts cost \$39.65. Next lowest were El Segundo, rich in refineries, and Beverly Hills. In Beverly Hills the school and special district taxes were lower, but there was a city property tax of \$63 per \$24,000 house (if such a house existed in Beverly Hills).

In Los Angeles the bill for schools was \$314.64. The city property tax was \$150.94 and the special district levy was \$31.52 in tax code area 4. The rate varied in different parts of the city by a few cents. Newhall, Saugus and Valencia suffered high rates. For schools Newhall paid \$399.45, Saugus paid \$408.75, and at that time Valencia paid the Newhall rate, for all the built-up areas were in the Newhall School District.. Special districts cost \$143.74 in Newhall, \$162.36 in

Saugus, and \$229.01 in Valencia, where local landscape maintenance districts were common.

The tax rate in Newhall was 13.1414 per \$100, while in Saugus it was 13.6068 and in Valencia it was 14.5625. Valencia's rate was the highest in the county. The rate in each community, for chart purposes, was the tax code area rate that included the most number of parcels of property. Some other rates were higher, or lower.

In November 1971 Wayne Crawford extracted from Richard T. Jarnagin, a Principal Administrative Assistant of the County, a detailed breakdown of the costs we would face in Parks and Recreation. We worked with Captain Gerald K. Enger, the Commander of the Newhall station, on submitting a detailed request for figures from the Sheriff's department, which would be so precise that the county could no longer claim that they had misunderstood.

We nailed down the detail of street maintenance costs, a little over \$90,000 a year for three square miles based on Newhall. I compiled from tax records a list of the biggest property owners. They did not include Newhall Land or Standard Oil. It was interesting to see how much land in the valley was owned by Bob Hope.

I did a study based on *California Public Schools Selected Statistics, 1970-71* (Sacramento, 1972). I called it "Figures Concerning Financing of the 118 High School Districts in the State of California, 1970-71." I compared high school district tax rates to total school tax rates, the amounts spent per ADA (average daily attendance of pupils), the assessed value (A/V) per pupil and the amount of state aid. High school tax rates ranged from .83 to 3.14 per \$100 of assessed value, which in theory was 25% of the market value. The Hart District rate was 2.70. High school district expenditures per pupil ranged from \$795 to \$1676. State aid per pupil from \$153 to \$568. Local support ranged from 82.9% of expenditure per ADA to 16.2%. Only Chowchilla High School District in Madera County contributed a higher percentage (by 0.4%) of support from local sources while spending less total per ADA. Elementary districts were all over the place. Bangor Elementary School District had a tax rate of \$2.03, spent \$678 per ADA, had an assessed value per ADA of \$19,213, and got state support of \$318. Golden Feather ESD in the same high school district (Oroville) had a tax rate of \$1.47, spent \$1196 per ADA, had A/V per ADA of \$186,662, and got state support of \$366!

In the Bret Harte High School District the Mark Twain Elementary School District had a tax rate of 3.11, spent \$630 per ADA, had A/V per ADA of \$17,663 and got state support of \$148. Vallecito Elementary School District, also in the Bret Harte High School District, had \$26,952 A/V per ADA, spent \$747 per ADA, and got state support of \$575!

In the Hart High School District the Castaic Elementary School District tax rate was \$1.91. They spent \$1289 per pupil and got state support of \$362 while their A/V was about four times that of the next richest district (Newhall), which got state support of \$281 and could spend \$832 on a tax rate of 3.04. Saugus had

spent only \$611 per on a tax rate of 3.19, A/V \$10,718 per pupil and state support of \$297.

How many high school districts in the state had a higher tax rate than Hart's, and got less state support for their effort? Absolutely none.

I had some personal experience with inequity in school district funding. I had taught for a year in the Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio, the poorest district in Texas in terms of assessed valuation per student. I loved the school, but could not live on \$267.00 a month.

I reported the results to Senator Newt Russell late in October of 1972, and two weeks later received the state aid formula in the mail. Any formula which was forty-two pages long was suspect. I wrote to Mr. Russell, "We have no local control over our growth so we must have your help. I hope the legislative branch will take positive action to resolve the problem before the judiciary forces action."

On November 17, 1972, Hart Superintendent Dave Baker wrote to State Senators Russell and John V. Harmer, mentioning the "U.S. Supreme Court current consideration of Rodriguez-like Serrano V Priest." However, *Serrano vs. Priest*, rather than legislative problem solving, ended the disparity.

On December 8 the *Los Angeles Times* told how revenue sharing was going more to counties and less to cities based on new tax-effort figures.

Early in December I got a form letter from Larry Wade at Newhall Land inviting me to a flood control hearing at the "improbable time" of 6:30 p.m. on December 11 at Placerita Junior High. The letter said that we stood to lose millions of dollars in protection unless community support could be demonstrated. I am not sure Newhall Land got the kind of community support they felt they needed.

The meeting in the multipurpose room at Placerita was supposed to be conducted by Congressman John H. Rousselot (R-San Marino) and U.S. Senator John V. Tunney. Tunney did not show, for he was in Beverly Hills attending a fundraiser for Hebrew University. Perhaps his attendance had been announced as a drawing card to the meeting, but flood control was a big enough issue to overflow the hall. The Army Corps of Engineers was planning 28.5 miles of channel and levee works along the Santa Clara River from Oak Spring Canyon westward past I-5. In addition there would be flood control along Sand and Iron Canyons, the lower part of Mint Canyon, the South Fork of the Santa Clara River, Placerita Creek and Newhall Creek. There would also be opportunities for hiking, bicycling and horseback riding, as well as beautification features and enhancements to the wildlife habitat.

The audience, which packed the hall, was determined to prevent concrete channels and some of the other "improvements" they had seen developed in Los Angeles. I sat for hours, stood as the last speaker, summarized the arguments pro and con, and said the plans needed a lot more work.

I commended the local media that spoke from the heart and got people out to the meeting, and commended the officials who were present. I said I was sorry that Senator Tunney had to attend a dinner in Beverly Hills at a \$500 per couple

affair for American Friends of Hebrew University. I added that we needed a balanced economy, that our tax districts were a mess, the cost of shopping was very high, there was a lack of public facilities, and that they should let our own city make decisions.

The next day Congressman Rousselot wrote to me asking me to attend a meeting with Colonel Roper of the Army Corps of Engineers and Arthur Bruington of the county Flood Control District.

On February 24, 1972, the Congressman announced in the *Los Angeles Times* that he would recommend underground concrete channels. He had commissioned a house to house poll which revealed that 78% had not attended any flood control meetings, that 66% supported some sort of flood control, and the most popular technique was stone lined channels with earth bottoms, supported by 22%. Nothing was said about concrete channels diverting water from our underground aquifer.

The meeting with Rousselot, Roper and Bruington was postponed a couple of times, but finally occurred at 3:30 on March 16, 1973. I was astounded to find that I was the only person from the Santa Clarita Valley in attendance. By this time John Rousselot had called me at home and at work, throwing the front office at school into a tizzy, but I had not realized that I was "it." We met in Colonel Roper's office in Los Angeles. There were probably ten people there, including Meg Gilbert of Supervisor Baxter Ward's office. I was treated as a person who understood all sides of the issue. I hoped I did.

At Rousselot's request, I moderated a town meeting on flood control late in June at the Valencia Library. The outline of problems that I later dropped into my folder on the topic included the fragmentation in our communities, oldtimers vs. newcomers, rural vs. urban, and the lack of communications except on gut issues such as flood control, which the people opposed, but special interests wanted.

The Corps had issued the "Proposed Plans of Improvement for Flood Control and Allied Purposes, Newhall-Saugus and Vicinity, Los Angeles County, Santa Clara River Basin, Calif." It cited \$3,400,000 damages from floods in January and February of 1969, and noted that we were in the expansion path of Los Angeles. In response, I made it clear that we did not wish to be a mere extension of Los Angeles.

The report projected growth from 52,000 in July 1971 (250 per cent growth in 11 years) to 230,000 by 1990, according to the North County General Plan. I noted that the population figure had recently been reduced to 200,000 by 1990, and that the North County General Plan had been scrapped.

While the county was working on a general plan for the entire county, there was only one local representative out of fifty. I suggested that local developers should pay part of cost of flood control, and asked for identification of the "local interests" who wanted earth-bottomed channels.

An earth-bottomed channel combined with a required debris basin would cost \$1,800,000 more than a concrete-lined channel, with \$120,000 extra in annual costs and \$95,000 less in benefits, but I noted as well that the Regional Planning



Commission had shown no concern for aesthetics in Iron, Bear and Sand Canyons.

I pointed out that there would be redistribution of ground water, that ground-water rights would need adjusting, and that the remaining oaks would need irrigation.

We left with the feeling we had a commitment to a system that would not disturb our water supply. At the time I did not know of any rare or endangered species to consider.

I believe that was also the year that Congressman Rousselot walked into the Boys and Girls Club Auction looking very lonely. Chris and I invited him to join us at our table, and we had a long conversation about the trials of being a Member of Congress, the hard traveling on redeye flights, too little time at home and the stress on his marriage. If I ever had any aspiration for political office, that conversation dampened it.

Later I was invited, with a host of others, to join his advisory board. That meant I would occasionally be invited to a no-host breakfast, generally at Tip's Restaurant on Pico Canyon Road (now an IHOP), of perhaps twenty people, and we would discuss the issues and politics. I was not really interested in partisan politics, and did not like Rousselot's connection with the ultraconservative John Birch Society, but did appreciate the attention he paid to our community and the way he listened to people.

In 1973 the January annual meeting of the Newhall-Saugus-Valencia Federation of Homeowner Associations was attended by a different bunch of representatives. The four officers attended, namely Haak, Crawford, Wynn and I, but Dorothy Riley sat in for Paul Patten as Placerita Canyon's representative. Tom Jones of American Beauty was absent, as were Vasu Hayek of Sky Blue and George Keegan of Vista Hills. Nancy Murachanian represented Four Oaks, Bob West was there for Old Orchard 1, and Tempo sent Harry Day, Greg Ward and Barnard Theule. Elaine Benson, Ken Wullschlager and Tom Collier represented Vista Hills, and Mrs. Robert Wilke was there for Newhall.

We endorsed the community college bond issue [which passed with an 89% yes vote when the public learned we could have the campus and lower taxes], and discussed hospital zoning and flood control. Nancy Murachanian made the case for endorsing the construction of Whites Canyon Road from Nadal Street to the top of Sky Blue Mesa, and got an endorsement by a vote of 8-0, with one abstention. I told those present that the county had appointed a Community Advisory Committee on October 5, 1972, but only four people attended the first meeting, so the committee was dissolved. We passed a motion in support of portable recreation facilities sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club, and requested that the County proceed with the construction of Valencia Glen Park as soon as possible. These motions were significant to organizations and the county, which looked for expressions of public support in the absence of any local government.

Two weeks later we heard from Newt Russell, who was delighted to tell us of a 30.7% increase in state support for education, grades K-14.

On March 7, 1973, I wrote Richard T. Jarnagin, Principal Administrative Assistant of the County Department of Parks and Recreation, asking for quick implementation of Proposition D, which would help cut the tax rates for landscape maintenance districts.

Proposition D was an amendment to the county charter, which used to require county crews to do all landscape maintenance everywhere in the county (at what had proved to be a very high cost for Valencia). I had complained about the inefficiency to Supervisor Dorn's office, and found that this problem was another one which was solved with a few words and a little effort because an elected official was responsive. One summer day his chief deputy, Bobbie Meyers, called me at home to tell me that the Supervisor wanted to put a proposition on the ballot to amend the charter so the county could contract with private enterprise for maintenance of "remote" operations. All that Warren Dorn wanted was some evidence of public support for what would amount to an elimination of some county jobs.

Although I asked for the change on behalf of the homeowner federation, I did not know many people who lived in the Valencia landscape maintenance districts who would benefit directly from it. Dianne Crawford answered my phone call and said she would call some people, explain the situation, and ask them to call downtown. The effort was successful, for the next day the Board of Supervisors passed Mr. Dorn's motion for an amendment.

Then it was time to campaign. I wrote a press release, took it to Newhall Land, where Larry Wade made enough photocopies, and then mailed copies to all the newspapers in the county. Ruth Newhall let me borrow a copy of Ayers' *Newspaper Guide* so I could hand address all the envelopes. Then I spent a Saturday making the rounds of the downtown radio and television stations, talking to those newsroom people who would see me. For this effort we got a few editorial endorsements. My main purpose was to let people know someone wanted Proposition D to pass, so we would be contacted if there was any opposition.

The county employees were silent. The few vacancies that would be caused by the charter change would be handled by attrition. The issue passed by a margin of 70% to 30%. The sad thing was that the county was very slow to implement it. It took consistent reminders from the Valencia homeowners to get anything done. However, once the contracts were let the tax rates for landscape maintenance dropped 90% temporarily. The county had some account reserves which were applied to the tax reductions, and when those were gone the net savings was about 50%.

On April 13, 1973, *The Signal* announced it was abandoning the field of battle over the issue of the name of our valley. The Canyon Country Chamber of Commerce had passed a resolution in support of naming our area the Santa Clarita Valley. We had discussed this issue at the Del Prado board meetings, and felt that Valencia Valley, which had been pushed as a name by Scott Newhall, only spoke for part of us. Dan Hon and I met, and approached Scott about a resolution of the

issue. He caved in immediately and very gracefully. He said editorially, “If we do not adopt an official name for our valley once and for all – and do not do it right now – we shall be a hopelessly frustrated and fragmented people forever....

“It is *the war* we must all win – together.”

In May the NSVFHA met at Wayne Crawford’s house. With Mel Wynn, Wayne and I present we had a quorum, which because of our experience we had made it easy to make. Paul Patten and Dorothy Riley represented Placerita Canyon, while George L. Szabo was there for Valencia Hills and Nancy Murachanian voted for Four Oaks.

We called for a local flood control committee, and moved to oppose the county’s plans for Emberbrook Drive to be built in Placerita Canyon until the overall impact of the road could be related to future planned development. We called for a new Community Advisory Committee, noted with satisfaction county budgeting for construction of Whites Canyon Road, and called on the county to require more contributions to parks by developers. We called the county’s attention to our objections to the Land Use Policy Guide to the Open Space Element of the general plan, because it had been adopted without any “meaningful *exchange*” of ideas, and called for strong controls over billboards. We urged Assemblyman Russell to conduct a poll on the requirements for local RTD service. Mel Wynn stated that he believed we were paying over a million dollars a year to the RTD, with no service being provided. We also pushed for developers being required to donate school sites.

Our active dues paying members were Del Prado, Four Oaks, Old Orchard No. 1, Princess Park, Sierra Hills, Valencia Fairways, Valencia Glen, Vista Hills and Woodlands Sand Canyon. We assumed that Friendly Valley, Monteverde and Old Orchard No. 2 were functioning, but had not joined. We believed other associations were inactive. It was very difficult to gather information on the neighborhood associations.

In July the idea of a penny tax for transit surfaced. The law required an election, and at least this seemed to present an opportunity to get our own transportation system. The job was to figure out how.

Baxter Ward declared he was for incorporation, saying that “Los Angeles County is so colossal that it is ‘impossible’ for unincorporated areas to enjoy the same representation accorded an incorporated city.” I was convinced that efforts on behalf of self-government, whether city or county, were a help to our valley. The county wanted to make us happy.<sup>7</sup>

As a teacher I had to find employment every summer, or starve. That summer I had the job of my dreams, for it meant working in my own valley with a lot of community leaders. Larry Margolis and Herb Oberman of the Department of Public Social Services, Jim Foster and Russ Cochran of the Saugus School District, and some others, were working to organize the Santa Clarita Valley Community Health Council. I was hired for a couple of months, at \$1,000 a month, to set up the office, hire a secretary and help get a grant application done.

I had to come up with some population figures, and research showed that the 1970 census did not even consider us to be a community. The reports gave a total of 47,752 in the Santa Clarita Valley including Newhall, Valencia and Rancho Santa Clarita. I totaled other figures for Canyon Country at 18,480; Sand Canyon at about 1,000; Saugus at 7,762; Valencia at 4,418; Agua Dulce at 1,452, Castaic and Val Verde at 1,964 and the Honor Rancho at 1,165 to get a grand total of 48,981. In 1973, based on post office and phone company figures, our population was 61,267.<sup>8</sup>

On October 1, 1973, I wrote to Chief Justice Donald R. Wright, protesting the division of the Santa Clarita Valley into two districts, pointing out that the census tracts did not provide usable information because they were marked off before 1960. I said we had no interests in common with Thousand Oaks and Newbury Park, but did have them with the Antelope Valley and the Ventura County communities of Piru and Fillmore. I pointed out that we had no city government and wanted access to legislators who would have offices close by.

On October 12 *The Signal* ran an article, "Monumental Eyesores: Huge New Power Towers Planned." The Los Angeles City Department of Water and Power was to build 132 towers along a ten-mile stretch of our valley, with the right-of-way to be 560 feet wide. Construction was to begin in 1978. This was deadline day for input on the EIR. Their editorial, "Invasion of the Power Poles," began, "For more than a century, the misbegotten mobs of Los Angeles have treated us with the same consideration the Visigoths displayed during the sack of Rome. In the cloudy mind of every member of the downtown petty bourgeoisie, the Santa Clarita Valley exists solely for his or her convenience."<sup>9</sup>

I wrote to Melvin Frankel of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power expressing our strenuous opposition to their plans for power towers. I cited the absence of a specific county plan, the lack of an effort by DWP to consult with organizations in the Santa Clarita Valley, visual pollution and their past disregard for the skyline along Interstate 5. I formed a one-person Committee Resisting Aerial Pollution, and put out a press release. The Newhalls headed it, "CRAP Hits DWP." There had been no requirement to notice us about public hearings because there was no city in the valley. I asked for, and got, a law about that.

On December 6, 1973, I wrote to the membership of the NSVFHA, saying, "The meeting on December 15th (see attached notice) could be the most crucial in the history of the Federation. It could be the last.

For the most part the present leadership of the Federation is retiring so that they might make a more direct effort to bring self-government to the Santa Clarita Valley through incorporation....

I cited our successful campaign to amend the County Charter, to achieve lower landscape maintenance rates, and expressed disappointment that some of the rates were going up rather than down because of lack of interest on the part of local associations.

We have only won most of the battles, not all of them.

Now is the time for you to give more of yourselves. Attend the meeting on December 15th and find out what is happening.

However, the Federation soon folded for lack of interest.

In March, 1973, George Voigt & Associates, of 756 South Broadway in Los Angeles, offered a campaign budget for incorporation of a city of either 30,000 or 50,000 people, ranging from \$33,829.75 to \$40,066.00 for the first phase. Our problem was that we were homeowners, not businessmen or the Chamber of Commerce. George and his wife Marjorie ran several associations through their office. George served as Executive Director of the U.S./Mexico Sister Cities Association and the California Contract Cities Association. We had very little idea what those organizations were. Going through the LAFCO stage would be another \$1,000, including the \$500 fee which had to be paid to LAFCO. An organized "yes on incorporation" campaign could cost as much as \$27,463.75 more.

We would never have this kind of money at our disposal, not for Canyon County, and not for the incorporation of what would turn out to be "the largest newly incorporated city in the history of humankind."

Voigt, who attended Contract Cities functions with his wife for years after our incorporation, never said anything to me about our campaign. I do not know if he realized we had gone on our own. He did provide a lot of useful information on city formation and LAFCO.

On April 21, 1973, the CIVIC board included Tom Blomquist, Carl Boyer, Michael Carey, Lorin Chitwood, Carol Conant, Wayne Crawford, Scott Franklin, Hap Gillaspay, Les Hiebert, Davis McLean, Tom Neuner, Chuck Willett and George Voigt.

CIVIC, the Committee of Interested Volunteers Incorporating a City, issued "A Report to the People of the Hart District on Incorporation," which managed limited circulation based on how many photocopies could be made. It had been put together by a number of people through handwritten drafts and computer prints. I typed the final copy on my IBM Selectric in my home office at 24355 West La Glorita Circle in Newhall, which was the registered office once we incorporated.

The report was fourteen pages of explanations under headings outlining the twelve reasons why we should incorporate, which were basically local control, accessible government and better services. We went through the character of cities, ranging in Los Angeles County from about a hundred people to more than two and a half million, accountability for the taxes we already pay which would be controlled by our city, the argument for local planning and zoning, and better representation. We discussed the reasons for opposition to cityhood, including the rapport local businesses had with the county, ignorance of the tax structure and the name issue. We proposed a city of \$120 million in assessed valuation that looked a little larger than the one that was finally approved by LAFCO in 1987.

We compared the tax rates of similar cities, roughly between one and two dollars, with our rate of \$2.3869 in a typical tax code area, the highest Valencia

rate in tax code area 6626 being \$4.6984 per \$100 of assessed valuation, which was figured at 25% of the market value. We showed how special districts could be eliminated, their services provided more efficiently by city government, but how we would begin to operate as a contract city. We explained that some revenues were restricted for use in building and maintaining roads and bridges, but we made it clear that we projected no new kinds of taxes or increases in current rates. We detailed from where the money would come and how it would be spent, including \$35,000 for a city manager and \$1,058,180 for Sheriff's services, based on 1970-1971 figures plus an inflation factor. The budget summary was based on 1970-1971 revenues and inflated 1972-1973 expenditures, and still showed a surplus of \$87,270 based on expenditures of \$1,633,180.

We explained why previous reports had been out of balance.

We asked for help.

We tried to sell \$5.00 memberships in CIVIC.

Nothing happened.

On March 17, 1973, CIVIC accepted Andrew Martin's resignation from the board and from membership. The minutes mentioned Bob Hoffman as a director. Present at the meeting were Clyde Bragdon, Ted Downs, Tom Blomquist, Chuck Willett and Greg Ward. Wayne Crawford was elected to the steering committee in the place of Andy Martin.

A week later Wayne Crawford transferred the county property tax tapes to our own computer files. We approved spending \$300 for a letter to the 2504 local property owners who had not filed for a homeowners exemption asking them to join CIVIC. Chuck Willett and Tom Blomquist were appointed to the board. The letter resulted in lots of filings for the homeowners exemptions, but few memberships.

Mike Carey was to chair the steering committee.

Les Hiebert would chair the speakers committee.

The next week it was reported that Dan Hon had agreed to draw up incorporation papers for CIVIC.

On April 7, 1973, Jeremy Jones resigned as Vice Chairman and from the board because he would be spending three months in Washington State. Bob Hoffman resigned due to ill health, which had also prompted his resignation from the Boy Scouts of America.

I ran for the board of the Santa Clarita Community College District in November 1973. I was disappointed that CIVIC was having no success. I felt that holding elective office might help me build credibility and contacts, and that some experience in public service might prove to be very valuable later. I raised \$350, spent \$351.66, and won after handing out thousands of cheap little campaign cards. My first contribution was \$10 from Tom Lowe, Chairman of the Board at Newhall Land. I was glad to get it. I had owned ten shares of stock in Newhall Land and had lost money on that investment. I had received 2,646 votes, with 2,280 for Ted Bartell and 2,194 for Neil McAuliffe. Jesse Boykin earned 800, Charles D. Rhodes got 598, and Leonard C. Haynes, Jr. trailed with 579. I

had received an endorsement from *The Signal*, which said that three of us were qualified but might split the vote, so they were backing me so an unqualified person would not win.

At the end of 1973 CIVIC had \$42.16 in the bank.

CIVIC met a few times in 1974. One of the joys of working to incorporate a city was getting help from unexpected places. We got a letter dated July 18, 1974, from Robert R. Ostrom, Assistant to the City Manager of Simi Valley, with a copy of their incorporation study and some other materials. The day Simi Valley had incorporated with about 60,000 it was the second largest city in Ventura County and in the top eighth of the cities of California. The proposed budget for 1970-1971, according to the Simi Valley incorporation study committee, was based on revenues of \$2,073,200 and expenditures of \$2,046,200.

They had hired Bruce Altman as their city manager from Brisbane, California. In some respects they sounded like us. "Our condition was compounded by a remote county government – some 35 miles and a long distance call removed – with no accessible local offices."<sup>10</sup>

In the face of a proposed 42% hike in costs for a contract with the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, Simi Valley developed their Community Safety Agency in lieu of the normal police force. A sub-agency of the human resources department, the men wore green blazers instead of uniforms, showed no weapons outwardly, and were organized with a community safety administrator, four supervisors and thirty-three community safety officers who worked as generalists. The crime rate has continued to be among the nation's lowest in the face of significant growth.<sup>11</sup>

In February 1974 the issue of reapportionment, which had been in the courts, was dealt with. We were split into three Assembly districts, two Senate districts and three Congressional Districts. No one *had* to take us seriously. Fortunately, at that time we enjoyed good representation, at least as we were concerned about local issues.

On April 22, 1974, Governor Ronald Reagan came to town to help dedicate the Dr. William G. Bonelli Center for Instructional Resources at College of the Canyons. Fellow trustee Ed Muhl, Charge of Production at Universal International and a great board member, had pulled. We met with the governor in the board room in a portable building, and before we all went out to the ceremony he demonstrated his ability to tell stories. The other governing board members were Peter Huntsinger, Fran Claffey and Don Allen. Pete was Curtis Huntsinger's brother. Pete was hard working, thoughtful and a great person with whom to work.

Somehow I wound up sitting next to Governor Reagan on the platform, and noticed that he spent much of the time looking at clippings from *The Readers' Digest* which he fished out of his jacket pocket. Later Lou Reiter and Jim Rentz succeeded Ed Muhl and Don Allen, and then Kevin Lynch succeeded Jim Rentz. If Lou had not retired abruptly, things probably would have continued to go well, but when he left for Florida the district suffered.

The valley suffered a great wound to its leadership when the Reverend Samuel Dixon, Jr., died in April at the age of 45. Sam had been the pastor of the First Macedonia Church of Christ in Val Verde. He merited two banner headlines, above the masthead, for stories recounting his life. Scott Newhall recalled “the unforgettable day of Martin Luther King’s assassination. An entire nation was shocked and grieved – that is an entire nation except for the Hart High School District, which celebrated the dreadful occasion by refusing to lower the American flag to half-staff in mourning.... But Sam was at his ministry in Val Verde, healing the wounds and calming the rage that began to swell.”<sup>12</sup>

If Sam was not on the roof of his church making repairs, he was cooking for a Boys and Girls Club luau. He was everywhere in the community, and everyone capable of caring loved him. People from his church packed the chapel at Eternal Valley for his funeral. Hundreds of us, including the Lieutenant Governor of California, stood outside.

Through the spring and summer there was little happening to promote hope we would have self-government, ever. Scott Newhall editorialized, “Until the leading spirits of the Santa Clarita Valley finally realize that our future lies in handling our own affairs,” and went on with fourteen more “untils....”

“The Santa Clarita Valley will always be just another cactus covered comfort-station rest stop on the Freeway to Hell in the Mojave Desert.”<sup>13</sup>

We did what we could to glean information on homeowner associations. Newhall Land’s monthly, *The View from Valencia*, provided information not found in *The Signal*. People like Lola Vangasken, who had been involved in Del Prado, were elected to homeowner boards elsewhere. We did not know until after we had formed our city that Bob Kane of the Fairways board had served as mayor of Carson.

On August 23, 1974, I wrote to Senator James R. Mills, asking him to change his stand on AB 3552, our bill to get our valley out of the SCR TD. Ruth Newhall, Dan Hon and I had spearheaded the effort, with support from Dick Millar of the chamber, and Joe Whiteside from labor. The Southern California Rapid Transit District had given the franchise to serve our valley to the Antelope Valley Bus Company, which had given us two local routes, neither of which worked because we had not had input into the design of the service. I did not know why Mills was opposed, and asked that if his objection was based on our not paying the sales tax if we got out of the SCR TD, please set us up to pay the tax to our own district.

On August 30 Senator Lou Cusanovich wrote that AB 3552 had passed the Senate unanimously. The governor signed it. This proved to be the beginning of the service we enjoy today.

On September 3, 1974, I wrote to Governor Reagan asking that he sign Assemblyman Knox’ AB 4271, which would help new county formation. It was not what we wanted, but it was fair, I said. “When you spoke at the dedication of our first permanent building at College of the Canyons you referred to our growing ‘city’ – we have no city but there is strong support for being allowed to attempt county formation.”



On September 6 Chapman Bone, Chief of the Special Services Division, provided very specific voter registration counts for six areas of the Santa Clarita Valley.

Eight days later the CIVIC board met at Tiny Naylor's. The announcement of the meeting noted our problems in making a quorum. On Oct. 1, 1974, we held our annual meeting, which lasted forty minutes. We elected Davis McLean, Jim Summers, Wayne Crawford, Dianne Crawford, Les Hiebert, Michael Carey and me to the board.

On October 30, 1974, Richard B. West of the Statistical Research and Consulting Division of the Board of Equalization gave us forecasts of local revenues for seven specific areas, the seventh being outside the six we had mapped but still within the valley.

We had specific census tract data from the 1970 census.

There were going to be no slipups, and no lies.

We could document everything.

In November 1974 the *North Los Angeles County General Plan Newsletter* projected that in 1995 the population of the Santa Clarita Valley would be 118,000, and there would be 214,000 people in the Antelope Valley. There was also a projection that 12,000,000 passengers would be using Palmdale Intercontinental Airport. Of course not all predictions pan out. Palmdale offered passenger service sporadically, and none forty years later.

We certainly had cause to incorporate a city. However, county formation was making some real headway. On November 10, 1974, in the *Los Angeles Times*, Ken Lubas quoted Dan Hon in saying that the Acton, Canyon Country and Newhall-Saugus-Valencia Chambers were in favor of forming a county. Ken presented statistics that I had compiled, mentioned the meeting scheduled for Nov. 20 at Valencia Public Library, and said we had expressed the hope we could stay in the Los Angeles County Fire Control District. The *Times* also published a table of tax rates and total amounts due on \$26,000 house. Agoura, Willowbrook and Westlake Village topped Valencia's rate of \$15.5437 and bill of \$1010.74.

The minutes show that on November 26, 1974, CIVIC's board voted six to one to support Canyon County formation. The next day *The Signal* published questions and answers about the county movement, which was soon in the petition stage, with a legal description drawn by Ruth Newhall.

On January 18, 1975, Tom Blomquist moved to fill five vacancies on CIVIC's board, but the motion failed 4-3. Mike Carey moved to appoint Andrew Martin to the board, and that passed 6-1.

On February 26 I wrote to Governor Brown in support of Assemblyman Robert C. Cline's AB 674 in support of what became Santa Clarita Woodlands State Park, saying that the proposal for EXPO 80 and plans for development would put the lands beyond reach.

On March 25 the CIVIC board met at Tiny Naylor's. Tom Blomquist, Wayne Crawford, Jim Summers, Mike Carey, Andrew Martin and I were present,

with Davis McLean and Les Hiebert absent. Jack Hutchinson, Jo Blomquist and E. Wanjon were elected to the board, and then Hal Degman was elected.

On April 7, 1975, we elected new officers. By this time the composition of the board had changed. Many of the members were partisan Democrats in spite of the fact that the area was overwhelmingly Republican. I had no problem with Democrats being involved, but many in the group were out to prove a point politically. Andrew Martin was elected President, Tom Blomquist as 1st Vice President, Jack Hutchinson as 2nd Vice President, Mike Carey as Secretary, and Jo Blomquist as Treasurer. Hal Degman was chosen 3rd Vice President, E. Wanjon as 4th Vice President, and Wayne Crawford as 5th Vice President. Andy wanted to go on naming officers, but I said, "This group wouldn't elect me Dog Catcher, so why bother?" Jim Summers and I remained as directors. Davis McLean and Les Hiebert were absent. After the election I discussed boundaries.

A week later Ruth Benell, Johnny Johnston and his wife attended. I presented a new proposal for incorporation boundaries, which Benell said were too large. The population was too scattered, and the proposal was not likely to be approved by LAFCO.

In July Davis McLean and Jo Blomquist resigned from the board. Tom Neuner was elected. The next month Wayne Crawford resigned, and Hal Degman, who had stopped attending, had his seat declared vacant. W. Ringer was appointed to the board.

By this time the Canyon County commission was due to be appointed, and Jack Hutchinson moved to nominate directors for appointment to it. Michael Carey moved to table the motion, and prevailed by a vote of 4-2. Civic approved retaining Mike Phelan to obtain funds leftover from the 1960s incorporation group on a vote of 5-2. I moved that W. Ringer be appointed to negotiate with Newhall Land; he won unanimous approval.

After a two-month absence from CIVIC's board, Davis McLean was reappointed as a board member and as treasurer, replacing Tom Neuner, but CIVIC was moribund.

One day the Canyon County Formation Committee held a public meeting in the back room at Tiny Naylor's, which had been covered for television by Ann Martin. Andy Martin and several members of the CIVIC board sat right outside the entrance to the room. Martin announced that the board had voted, with two dissenting, to oppose county formation. The next day Davis McLean informed the papers that there had been no vote.

In July I wrote to Newt Russell in opposition to AB 824 (Dixon), which would have required that all school boards be elected from districts, saying that many smaller districts were not diverse enough to justify trustee areas.

The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society was being organized. By January 21, 1976, the date the first annual meeting, we were determined to raise awareness of the history of our valley, which we believed would help make people think of the Santa Clarita Valley as home, rather than a temporary stopping place, and so take a real interest in our government. Ruth Newhall had

pushed organization of the society. I served briefly on the first board, and as treasurer, but when Lloyd Houghton was suggested as someone who ought to be among the five incorporators I stepped aside gladly.

The Santa Clarita Valley Homeowners Concerned about Taxes was active in 1976. Lee A. Mowery of Valencia Hills was the chairman, and Gail Klein was the secretary. The letterhead listed sixteen representatives and their associations including Mowery, William Brown of Old Orchard II, Douglas Fish of Pinetree, Bill Hickey of Sand Canyon, Dennis Talle of Valencia Meadows, Mike Barclay of the Bonelli Tract, Rick Patterson of the Fairways, Felix Olmos of Oakridge, and Jed Potter of Tempo. Sharon Avena of Del Valle, Ray Cooper of Sierra Hills, James L. Vickers of Valencia Glen, Jim Best of Old Orchard I, Woodrow E. Lindsay of Mint Canyon and Don E. Yetter of Galaxy Highlands-Saugus were on the list. I represented Del Prado.

In September we heard a presentation from TUFF, Taxpayers United for Freedom, a San Fernando Valley coordinating organization. Dr. Clyde Smyth spoke on the issue of school unification. Friendly Valley was involved. Canyon County formation, bond issues, three openings on the Hart school board, and Assessor Phillip Watson's proposal for a one and one-half per cent ceiling on property tax were discussed. In a year we had grown from six individuals to sixteen associations representing, we claimed, 60,000 homeowners. Those doing much of the work were Gail Klein, Joan Cantrell, Jeff Benson and Lee Mowery.

We were working on the dissolution of the West Los Angeles County Resource Conservation District as well. That was Gail Klein's project, and was the subject of a fascinating LAFCO hearing in which we received great support from Supervisor Baxter Ward. However, LAFCO decided against us on a technicality, and it took legislative action to dissolve the district.

On September 5, 1976, the Historical Society was a cosponsor, with the Chinese American Historical Society, of the golden spike ceremony at Lang Station celebrating the centennial of the completion of the railroad between the Bay Area and Los Angeles.

We were one hundred years old, but still had no local self-government.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Signal*, Feb. 6, 1970.

<sup>2</sup>Photocopy of Charles S. Dyer's letter to the board; *The Signal*, Feb. 9 and 11, 1970.

<sup>3</sup>*The Signal*, February 13, 20, 23, 25 and 27, and March 2 and 4, 1970; and *The Potpourri News*, Feb. 26, 1970.

<sup>4</sup>*The Signal*, March 6, 9 and 11, 1970; and *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1970.

<sup>5</sup>*The Signal*, March 13, 16, 18, 20 and 30, 1970; copy of a flyer circulated by Boyer in Del Prado; and *The Potpourri News*, April 9 and May 14, 1970.

<sup>6</sup>*The Signal*, Sept. 14 and 16, 1970; and *Valley News and Green Sheet*, Sept. 17, 1970.

<sup>7</sup>*The Signal*, July 20, 1973.

<sup>8</sup>*The Signal*, August 8, 1973.

<sup>9</sup>*The Signal*, October 12, 1973.

<sup>10</sup>Bruce Altman, "Simi Valley Administrative Plan Uses Innovative Organizational Units," *Western City* (Sept. 1970), reprint.

<sup>11</sup>Bruce A. Altman, "Simi Valley, California," *Western City* (Feb. 1972), reprint.

<sup>12</sup>*The Signal*, April 29 and May 1, 1974.

<sup>13</sup>*The Signal*, May 24, 1974.