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Sonoma West (DISCOVERIES) Times & News — May 8, 1996

## Hope for Palm Terrace

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1996

Editor: In September, 1995, I wrote an article entitled "Requiem for the Land," for the Sonoma County EIR, detailing the struggle to preserve and protect the land known as Palm Terrace from development. As the title implies, and as I stated in the article, the story was written from a point of despair. After more than a decade of action and work, it looked like there was no way this land could be saved.

Sometimes things happen in strange ways. In the intervening year since writing this article, I have traveled from bleak resignation to immense hope. People have come together to actually put together a plan, a working committee and a fundraising effort, surpassing my wildest dreams of saving Palm Terrace. We are in sight of achieving what a year ago looked hopeless!

I write now because this article is being quoted by Holly Gustafson and others, in efforts to derail the incredible Laguna Uplands Project. It's become painfully clear to me that if you intend to volunteer for anything, you'd better accept the facts that the very best of intentions are often misunderstood, work that seems above reproach is open to attack, and volunteers are criticized for doing a job a) poorly b) incorrectly c) not the way the critic wanted it done. All of these things are happening to the Laguna Uplands Committee and the work they are doing.

From my work with local government, I understand the complexity and myriad issues attendant upon any transaction, let alone something as enormous as the Laguna Uplands Project. There simply is no way for any one person to have the entire picture including every point of view, every piece of research, every bit of input. This necessarily creates situations where people do the best they can with what they have. This does not mean people, or the projects they undertake are perfect or above reproach. It means they have taken on a task and tried to do something good for the community.

My understanding is that what is taking place now is the urgent business of securing the Palm Terrace property to preserve and protect it from development, with very real deadlines imposed by the developer to complete this real estate transaction. The issues of eventual ownership, development of a Native American Cultural Center or not, disposition and management of the land, leaving it as open space etc., are all issues which must be resolved in the future. My hope would be that Sebastopol-area Native Americans with familial and historic ties to this land figure significantly in these decisions. Before any decisions are made, the land must be saved!

The bottom line in all of this is that the developer is unwilling to wait for any other parties to step in at this point. If the bid to buy the land by the Laguna Uplands Project is derailed there will be a subdivision built. Without the Laguna Uplands effort, we might as well forget about the enormous issues needing resolution, because the land will have luxury homes built on it. The entire discussion of land preservation would be moot without the past efforts of many hard working community members because there would probably already be 35 homes built (the original proposal).

The Uplands Committee has some people on it who have been part of this historic effort, working for over 10 years to save this property. They are not perfect people, only hard working volunteers who have been willing to attend meetings, work after they've put their children to bed, write and create proposals and figure out fundraising plans. If things have not gone perfectly, I thank them wholeheartedly for their civic responsibility, their dedication and willingness to persevere. Have mistakes been made by the Laguna Uplands Committee? Probably. Who among us can claim to be different?

Saving Palm Terrace now is the task before us. My sentiments remain the same as expressed in my original article. Only now, because of the Laguna Uplands Project, I write with hope instead of despair.

Jude Kreissman, Sebastopol