

History Corner #6: Country Living in the City

by Fred Van Berkel

I wrote this article for the Coalition of Albuquerque Neighborhoods Newsletter over 20 years ago. It was also published in our TRNA newsletter in August 1983. It emphasizes the need for a strong neighborhood, which is still true today.

“Oh, what a view” ... With that picture in mind, many of the present Taylor Ranch people bought a piece of the West. Golf course, equestrian center, single family homes... all too good to be true. Bulldozers and moving vans met each other on the dangerous Coors Road and the unpaved Dellyne. But things started changing. The master plan had to be revised: the developer proposed smaller lots, apartment buildings, a six lane highway that would cut Taylor Ranch in two (running next to the power lines), a shopping center the size of Winrock/Coronado combined, and out with the equestrian center and the golf course. It became a matter of money: what could the developer squeeze out of the land (we can't blame them; they are in business to make money) and how could the developpee keep up the value of his home.

Against this background the Taylor Ranch Neighborhood Association was born. I believe we have one of the finest associations in town: maybe not in quantity but certainly in quality. We may not always agree among each other (an example below), but we have successfully made deals (what politics is all about). We do not have a six lane highway through the middle of Taylor Ranch, we will have a sized down shopping center, we have a small park, we have a dust ordinance (recently acquired), and we still have an equestrian center. In our dealing with other organizations, developers, or the city, the Board tries to keep in mind that it is not a choice between good and evil, but between two goods and that it is better to compromise than to antagonize.

Now we have the bridge issue. In our June [1983], newsletter we asked people to answer the following question: “Do you favor a bridge at Montano?” 46 said yes, 7 no, and 6 preferred a bridge at El Pueblo. The circulation of the questionnaire was approximately 1100 homes during June and July. Assuming that two people per household could have read the question, approximately 2200 people could have answered. Only 59 did. A 2.5 % response is hardly overwhelming. The Board members themselves are split on the issue and the response to our survey, although strongly preferring a bridge at Montano, wasn't a large enough number for us to be able to say: “the residents of Taylor Ranch want a bridge at Montano.”

There are good arguments for and against a bridge at Montano: “The bridge at Montano is the cheapest.” That is a good point. “Why bring half of Rio Rancho down Coors past Paradise Hills before they can cross the river?” That's a good point too.

When all the committees' and subcommittees' work is done, when the politicians find the issue no longer attractive, when the traffic becomes so overpoweringly messed up, the bridges (wherever they may be) will come. In the meantime, give us something that is politically attractive to solve the traffic problems: more buses, a lane for share-a-ride, or widening the entrance to I-40 East at Coors.

<>General Patton ordered parts for his tanks from the Sears Catalog. He was a manager. He could have waited; he didn't. He chose to solve the problem.

P.S. At the August 1983 Board meeting, the TRNA Board of Directors voted 7 - 6 to support a bridge at Montano.