

Chapter 23

A LAME DUCK

I was glad that Jo Anne Darcy decided to run for another term. Many had expressed concern to me that the future was too uncertain with two incumbents not running for reelection. While my mind was made up, probably for the first time since I had been elected to the council, I knew Jo Anne would consider another term. I attended Jo Anne's announcement to the press along with Linda Johnson of Assemblyman Runner's office, and Frank Ferry. I was happy to repeat to the reporters what I had said without ever being asked a number of times before. "I just want to say emphatically that all the time that Jo Anne has been a member of the City Council, she has really put the city first without any hesitation."¹

Jo Anne had done more than work hard for, and be loyal to, our city. I was convinced that she had done much to moderate Mike Antonovich's views. The good job her boss was doing had something to do with Jo Anne's performance for the county.

In the meantime, once I had announced I was not going to run again, I was a lame duck. I felt that I had accomplished my goal, which was to provide a platform of good government for the people of the Santa Clarita Valley. However, nothing was going to slow me down as long as I had the responsibility of serving on the council.

On January 8 I took off to attend the World Mayors' Conference in Jaipur, India. I had been invited as a result of my efforts to begin a Sister City program during my second term as Mayor. Indeed, even during my first term Connie Worden, Bob Geiman, Judy Belue, Barbara Haire and I had organized the Santa Clarita Valley International Program in an effort to fund the expenses of bringing three students from Leningrad to study in Southern California. I had written the SCVIP articles so the program could serve as a vehicle for Sister City activities.

I had become acquainted with the work of Sister Cities International as a result of being active in the National League of Cities and that organization's International Municipal Consortium. I wanted Santa Clarita to have a sister city in a country that had relatively few such relationships with the United States, and India seemed to be the perfect choice. There were a number of reasons. India was the largest democracy in the world, and would soon be bigger than China. She was developing rapidly, and with only a dozen or so sister cities in the United States, any city having a good relationship with India would have an inside track to a lot of business opportunities. There were a significant number of Indo-American families in the Santa Clarita Valley who could serve as the core group to maintain the relationship. I counted on their cultural pride. We needed a core of believers because all of our efforts were to be self-funded. Our people seemed to be somewhat insular for a highly educated population, but had responded well to the cultural exchange with Russia.

Pranav and Jhoti Patel of Castaic helped me to contact the All India Union of Local Self-Governments, which was the counterpart of the National League of Cities, in 1996. Four days later the top two staff people of the All India Union were seated in my office at city hall, eager to talk. They had been in the United States on business, and had been advised by e-mail of my interest.

Working with council approval, I tried first to form a relationship with Aurangabad, and then with Navi Mumbai. Naim Zyed, a broker at Dean Witter, made the effort to pay a visit to city officials in Aurangabad. At first communications went well, but then they ceased. Later I met the mayor of Aurangabad in Jaipur, and he said they were going to establish a relationship with Chicago. After a while I sought the counsel of the All India Union and they recommended Navi Mumbai. This city, once called New Bombay, was a suburb of Bombay, now Mumbai, which is a sister city of Los Angeles. I envisioned some cooperation with Los Angeles in planning trips.

I wrote to the Mayor of Navi Mumbai and received a response by return mail. They were eager. Their city was a planned city intended to relieve Mumbai of some of the pressure of growth. It was a center of the movie industry. Our council approved a relationship, and then communications ceased. I did not give up. With the encouragement of Valerie Chatman, who had done business in Jaipur for several years, I kept trying different approaches. Kevin Keyes assumed the chairmanship of the SCVIP and lent his support until he moved to Orange County. One of Kevin's business contacts in Delhi worked to open talks. There was silence.

Finally we discovered the probable cause. In Navi Mumbai the people elect a mayor annually. The lady who responded to me first was nearing the end of her term. She was replaced by a wealthy man who was willing to work with us, but he was replaced a year later by a close relative with whom he had been feuding. Valerie Chatman discovered this by reading the Indian press on the internet. I gave up on Navi Mumbai.

However, my efforts did lead to the invitation to the World Mayors' Conference. I wrote that I was no longer mayor of Santa Clarita, had asked the Mayor if she would attend the conference, and had been told that I was welcome to represent her. If I was to attend, I wanted to present a paper on Strategic Planning.

That led to my being the American Key Speaker. The mayors of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and New Haven, Connecticut, also showed up briefly, trailing a junior U.S. Embassy official, but I was the only American there for the duration.

I had asked for a budget to attend the conference not to exceed the cost of one in Washington, so the cost of attendance would not be an issue. When attending any meeting I always tried to spend money as if it were my own, but this time I had to be extremely careful. One can fly to India for \$2,800, or perhaps on another airline for \$1,700 on a ticket from a consolidator, but the taxpayers paid \$975. The rest came out of my pocket. For that price I got to fly six segments going over, which took forty-four hours, and three returning.

In spite of my ticket being in coach, Gulf Air bumped me up to business class. On the other hand, due to fog in Delhi we sat up all night in the airport in Muscat, in the Sultanate of Oman. On the way home I found out that Oman is a really nice place to get stuck when the delay is even longer.

Seeing the luggage come off the carousel after going through immigration in Delhi was wild. My black bag on wheels, so common in America, was the only one of its kind. Most were huge bundles inside quilts tied with ropes.

At the bank I changed \$100 and received thousands of rupees, but fortunately they were mostly in bigger bills. As I loaded my bags on the free bus to the domestic terminal the driver said it would leave at 2:00. I smiled, "I'm already six hours late. What's twenty more minutes?" My feet were so swollen from all the flying I could not get my shoes on.

India seemed to be like Mexico forty years ago. Tuk tuks, bicycles, buses and cars shared the inadequate unfenced road. At least the cows, sheep and goats stayed in the fields.

I had a ticket on flight 473 to Jaipur, which had been scheduled to leave four hours before, but it was "boarding." Repeated questions got me to the man checking people in, there being only a tiny handwritten sign above his station. He said the flight was closed, to see the station manager "round to the right, second door." Right where? Door on left or right? I asked more questions. Finally I found the duty manager talking to four men who wanted to get on flight 473. I held out my ticket and said, "Me, too?"

He scribbled something down on a boarding card and told me to get on the plane. Where? What gate? No signs. More questions. People pointed through a door and I found five planes sitting on the tarmac in the distance.

"Which is 473 to Jaipur?"

A wave.

"Which one?"

"The one people are getting on." It was not an Indian Airlines plane, but was marked Air Alliance. I did not argue that.

"Do I walk?" I would not have been allowed to in the United States.

"If you can."

I walked.

As I climbed the steps they took my pass and said they were going to Jaipur. The Boeing 737 looked a little beat up but sounded great on takeoff and in the air. I was the last one to board at 3:00, but we sat for another half hour.

During the twenty-six minute trip the flight attendants served peanuts and packaged cake slices on a tray, and then came by with little cups of very white, sweet coffee. It was okay.

I sat next to a couple from Wellington, New Zealand, and we talked about travel in Rajasthan. They had an air pass but did not like the air service. Our flight did take off five hours and ten minutes late.

Some mayors who were on the flight and I were met by a number of people. A garland of flowers was placed around my neck and I was given a nice bouquet,

and then taken in hand by Satish K. Sharma, an assistant town planner. We went to a beautiful rural compound, the Chokhi Dhani, where I was escorted to suite S-6 and told to rest until 9:00, when he would pick me up for dinner.

Billed as an ethnic village resort, this place was quite a production. Drummers led the way as we entered. It was eighteen kilometers south of Jaipur on the Tonk Road in Vatika, through heavy traffic including carts pulled by camels. My suite consisted of a sitting room, a rather large bedroom, dressing area and a huge modern bathroom. The rack rate was about \$60, plus 6% tax.

It took a few moments to figure out how to get hot water, and probably would have taken longer if I had never lived in Scotland. I do not remember dinner. I was so tired.

I had breakfast with Peter S. Siyovelwa of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the Chairman of the Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania, whom I had seen on the flight from Muscat to Delhi, and Joyce Ngele, Mayor of the Pretoria Metropolitan Council in South Africa. The former mayor of Santa Clarita rated a private car, an Ambassador Nova diesel DX, an old car like all the other taxis. Most of the mayors were on buses for the drive to the conference hotel. I was escorted by an Indian employee of USAID, and also had a guide and a driver.

The police escort was necessary, as in Boston, simply to get us where we were going in a reasonable amount of time. The opening session ran way over the allotted time. They could not tell a cabinet minister or a governor that a five minute speech should be limited to five minutes. Fortunately Joyce Ngele was chair of the afternoon session. She knew how to prod the speakers. Then they took us through the Pink City, rushing by the Palace of the Winds to Fort Amer, a spectacular place. There we were all asked to climb stairs to a place from which we stepped onto platforms on elephants for the long jolting climb up the hill to the fort. This immense, wonderful piece of architecture was built mostly from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. It was impressive at night.

Dinner was at the maharani's palace, with an exhibition of dancing.

After another good night's sleep I had breakfast and was out in front of the compound at 8:30, since the conference was to begin at 9:00. Not a soul was there to wait with me, nor did I see my car, A-1.

Finally I climbed on board a bus and waited. Then my driver came to get me off the bus and I waited some more. On the bus I had met Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, Mayor of Khulna, Bangladesh. I gave him my card and he said, "I have been to Santa Clarita."

More confusion over the name, I thought. Everyone seemed to confuse us with Santa Clara.

"I have met your mayor, George Pederson."

Apparently George had been to some conference I did not know about and had hosted Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and his family for a day. He had even been to our city hall.

At 9:33 we pulled in behind the police escort parked on one side of the road. I would rather have been in the bus where I could have talked to the others, who

included the mayor and vice mayor of a district of Budapest, the mayor of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and others.

As luck would have it, the men from Budapest jumped into my car as their bus was broken, and we took off, arriving at the Hotel Clarks Amer to find the first session in progress.

Professor K.C. Sivaramakrishnan talked eloquently and clearly on urban changes and the need for stronger cities, which in India had recently been given the “right to live.”

Then John Norquist, the Mayor of Milwaukee, made an excellent case for local government, pointing out that cities survive through all the political changes. He was dressed in a new cashmere sweater and jeans, pointing out that United Airlines had possession of his suit and tie. John DiStefano of New Haven spoke briefly about priorities and partners.

Earl Kessler did a fine job with his topic and elicited much discussion. Unfortunately, the chairman, Mr. Dato Lakhbir Singh Chahi, the Secretary General of Citynet in Yokohama, allowed it to go on and on, so that I was given half an hour to deliver my paper and answer questions.

I said it was very frustrating to have so little time, but that I hoped everyone present in the full room would read my paper. I hit the high points and stressed the theme that our city government had a 91% approval rating in a recent public opinion poll, and great public support. If the cities of the world were ever to be empowered they would find that the public could help them demand a charter which would give them the power to do what they had to do, and to develop the necessary financing. If the different stakeholders were involved they would pay the taxes.

Then the chairman asked for questions. Silence. Finally one of the audience said she thought the process of strategic planning could help the cities accomplish their goals, and this started a lively discussion. If the cities of the world could get public support they could provide necessary services.

We broke for lunch but by the time people got organized it was time to go to a tea party at the mansion of the Governor of Rajasthan. After that we drove into the walled city to get a good look at the Palace of the Winds, a façade of the Hawa Mahal, by the home of the Maharajah of Jaipur, and to Nahargarh Fort where we enjoyed dancing, music, fire-eating and fireworks before dinner.

I helped myself to many kinds of food, found it all tasty, and while I needed some water I did not break into a sweat.

Donal Marren, Mayor of Dublin, proved to be a good companion. He had had his problems, taking the knees out of one suit when he fell in Delhi station while trying to keep up with a porter, and getting paint on the back of the other. We talked about his contacts with the European Union and the progress made in Dublin in recent years. I had been there twice, in 1985 and 1995, and had been impressed by the changes, largely due to a response to architectural guidelines.

Mr. G. Subbarao, Additional Chief Secretary of the Urban Development Department of the Government of Gujarat, talked about modern management. He

was easy to understand, pronouncing words clearly in his lilting Indian accent. Municipal bonds were new in India, and as the interest rate was about 14.5% the costs were great.

The weather had been good, although being gone from the Chokhi Dhani for so long each day made it impossible to dress for the temperature variations between 45° and 75°, so sometimes I sought the shade and other times I felt a little chilled. At least I was enjoying good health. The food, including the salad and the water, served at the functions, had proved to be quite good.

At 12:33 the Governor arrived so we could begin the last session an hour late. The delay had allowed some good interaction and an opportunity for Juanita Crabbe of the U.S. Sister Cities organization and Carol Graham of the U.K. to pitch their sister city and twinning operations.

A bouquet presented to the Governor of Rajasthan reminded me of the garlands of flowers presented to us at practically every occasion, as well as the flower paste placed on our foreheads as a sign of welcome. Flowers bloomed everywhere in this lovely place even if there was not enough grass and people had to sweep the dust off the roads daily.

The mayor of Jaipur addressed us in Rajasthani, the local language similar to Hindi. There were nineteen major languages in India, and several different alphabets, with the greatest variety in the South. I had expected translation services but there were none. Some of the addresses in Hindi were distributed in English later on.

Because of the heavy television coverage it was logical the local population would benefit from hearing the local language on the news. There were a couple of English language channels on the television in my room, but they showed American music videos and old movies.

Mayor Gupta continued on about the problems of the cities. I knew this only because of the occasional use of English terms, like “solid waste” and “landfills.” As Juanita Crabbe had said, “We all want jobs, a clean environment and a chance to give our kids a good education.” Mayor Gupta had said in part, “In Indian culture we treat our guests as God.” They sure try.

Then Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak spoke. He had founded Sulabh International to provide toilets for the people, and his movement had spread like wildfire. I wished I could understand his English, and looked forward to reading his paper later.

Mr. Bhanwar Lal Sharma, the man in charge of urban development and sports, spoke in Rajasthani but slipped into English occasionally. The Governor of Rajasthan, Baliram Bhagat, was introduced as a freedom fighter, founder of the All India Union of Students in 1944, and a member of the cabinet under Nehru, the Gandhis, and another prime minister, former governor of Himachal Pradesh and Minister of External Affairs. He preferred to speak in Hindi, but I knew he spoke English, as he had to me the day before at the tea party, and he spoke English to this session, which meant we were not further delayed by translation. He dwelt on the ancient history of cities – his own birthplace in Bihar more than

3,000 years old, the city states of Greece and the village republics of India. Long ago the businessmen built the health system so the poor would not spread disease. Today's megacities have megaproblems: health, safety, drainage, and sanitation. One could not breathe in Tokyo until they solved their transportation problems. London moved industries outside the city. The third tier of government was directly with the people. The problems of the masses – education, health, roads and culture – must be handled at the local level. Women were really involved because of the 35% of the seats in government were held for them.

He continued with the idea that local government had to have more power and resources. Poverty, health, education, roads and jobs could be tackled by the cities, which were becoming unlivable in India. One could not breathe good air or drink clean water. Malaria and cholera were coming back. These problems could not be tackled by remote control. Aristotle recognized that people came to the cities for a good life. Now there was a phenomenon called terrorism, an urban phenomenon. It started in the cities of Europe – the massacre of the Israelis at Munich was the start. In London there was a bomb blast every day. In India many lives were lost. At the local level it was necessary to “clean the climate” and deal with the deep-seated grievances. More than 50% of the people of India lacked the means of a decent living. This situation is explosive, a bomb blast every day in Delhi. They were trying to hold the lid on Jaipur.

The people must feel that the local authorities are trying to do their best. Mayors later become higher officials. In 1925 they had their first local elections, and their leaders trained at this level. Many of our leaders trained by making movies, or making millions of dollars.

We were supposed to adjourn at 12:45, and did at 2:28 to a surprise lunch. Afterwards we went to the Birla Auditorium for a felicitation ceremony where there were more speeches, and presents for the Mayors. Going in I was given another garland and had my forehead painted again by a young girl with beautiful eyes. Inside I joined Donal Marren, who said what I was thinking. “Wouldn't you like to take one of them home?” Then two of them approached us for autographs and I took their picture.

I thought the bus I boarded was going straight to the Chokhi Dhani, but then a guide came on board and announced that we were going to see the city palace first. It was near the central part of the Pink City but in a quiet area, and very large with an arms museum and another for art.

The conference had been supposed to end at 12:45, but we had been told the day before that we should plan to stay another night if we could, so I was prepared for the previously unannounced traditional dinner put on at the Chokhi Dhani. The young son of Mayor Gupta had taken me by the hand and showed me around. We ate with our fingers from plates and bowls made out of pressed leaves.

Finally I bought a computer-printed ticket to Agra for 110/- (less than \$3) on the “deluxe” bus, which may indeed have been one in a former life. I had gotten a reserved seat on the noon bus only twenty minutes before departure. We drove

238 kilometers, about 150 miles, in five hours. We passed many camel carts, carts drawn by bullocks and donkeys, an army convoy, all sorts of pedestrians, bicycles and trucks. There were also two and three wheeled motor vehicles, and several five-passenger tractors with a seat for the driver, two people on each fender, and sometimes a cartload of people behind. We stopped halfway for refreshments. I ordered a vegetable thali and got a whole dinner. One learned. I took a taxi from the bus station to the Hotel Atithi, which had been recommended. For about \$30 a night it was a little better than the coach tour hotels I was used to in Europe.

I found a P.C.O. and called home. It was not cheap, but it worked.

I had arranged for a car with driver and guide for the day. The cost was less than \$15, although they made some more by taking me to the best shops. First I went to a travel agent, where I got 570/- worth of train tickets for 780/-. It was worth the extra \$5 to avoid the waste of time at the station.

Then we took off at a fast pace for Fatehpur Sikri, a fabulous complex built in the late 1500s as the capital of Akbar's Mughal Empire, and abandoned after sixteen years due to problems with the water supply. The route to the old city was lined with trained bear acts.

Then we went to the Agra fort, a huge one with beautiful buildings inside, from which I got my first thrilling glimpse of the Taj Mahal down the river. We went back for the train tickets and I wound up in some shops. At one point the guide said, "You just go in there and look, and I get two liters of petrol." I admired his honesty, and spent some money too.

Having been told the best time to visit the Taj was 3:00 in the afternoon, aside from sunrise and sunset, I pushed to be there at that time, although there was cloud cover. It was *totally* spectacular. I was not prepared for the enormity of the grounds and the impact of the other palaces and mosques as well.

Having missed lunch I went to the nice restaurant across Fatehabad Road and had chicken stroganov, sweet and sour vegetables and coffee. It was good, and I was glad to have a change from curry dishes. The local rickshaw wallahs recognized me now. There was less hassle.

I went to Gwalior because of its stamps. When I collected stamps as a kid I had some from Gwalior, and always wondered what it was like, though I had no idea I would ever go there. So I sat in the first class waiting room at Agra Cantonment station; it was dank with the smell of urine from the facilities, all the more remarkable because this was the first foul odor I had smelled in my days in India.

In Gwalior I got an auto rickshaw without being hassled, was told the ride to Gwalior Gate would be 30/-, and the driver ran the meter. I had done my best to remember the layout of the city from the only map I could find, the one map posted in the tourist information office.

As I walked up the access road to Gwalior Fort, I admired the magnificent statues carved into the rock along the way. They had been defaced by conquerors who had chopped off the noses and private parts of many of them. At the top I wondered at first why I had made the effort, but soon I found there was a beauti-

ful Sikh temple. The Sikhs are monotheistic and believe in equality. They invited me to a lunch of naan, the Indian flat bread, with bean soup. Then I resumed walking, passing through a little village with a new public toilet which I thought might have been installed by Sulabh International. I caught a glimpse of palaces from the walls, and headed in their direction. It was a large group of buildings, built beginning in 1486. The whole walled fort was three kilometers long but I enjoyed the walk to the far end, my spirits rising in the sunny 80° weather. I went through the palaces rather thoroughly, paid a short visit to the museum and then left by way of the palace gate.

At the bottom the neighborhood was as typically Indian as any. There were pigs, goats and a sacred cow in the marketplace. Merchandise was loaded on handcarts under a large tree. There were a couple of three wheeled vehicles, and two men going by on a scooter. I walked down a street in the general direction of the railway station, and enjoyed being greeted frequently with a complete absence of hassle. One group of sweet children posed for a photo.

I continued down a neighborhood with no real street and then through a middle class area to the station, where I caught an auto rickshaw for Bada Square, the heart of the city. On arriving there I stood with 50/- in my hand and the driver got out 20/- change; there had been no meter used this time but no need to worry about the fare.

There was an interesting arcade full of restaurants and book stalls by the square and as I went through it I was hailed by an American named Buzz Burza. He had worked with the Peace Corps in Gwalior in the 1960s, and had returned to India for good when he came into an annuity of \$500 a month.

In the main square of Gwalior there was not one single four-wheeled vehicle to be seen except for one small bus in the ten minutes I spent looking for an auto rickshaw to take me to the Jai Vilas palace. Traffic went around the donkey lying on his back in the middle of the street, scratching his back. When I found a driver he took me to the palace; I had said nothing about the fare. I gave him 50/- and he gave me 20/- in change. As he had passed the test, I was glad that he offered to wait until I was done going through the museum of the Maharajah of Gwalior. It was interesting. The Maharajah had built his gaudy palace to impress the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, when he came to visit in 1875. Perhaps the most interesting feature was the model railroad, roughly G gauge, crafted from silver and crystal, which ran around the long dining table to deliver condiments to the seated guests.

The next day, in Delhi, I took an auto rickshaw to the Red Fort, which I did not find worth the effort after having been to Gwalior, and walked through the bazaar along Chandni Chowk. Jama Masjid, Delhi's greatest mosque, was crowded on the Muslim holy day.

In a nice place serving South Indian dishes I ordered Onion Marsala Dosa, figuring from the price that it might be a main dish. It might be described as a Swiss potato pizza, a little like hash browns fried into a flat cake filling the plate, with holes clear through in some areas. It was tasty.

I took a taxi to the international airport at 2:00 a.m.

We drove through the darkness as fast as the aging diesel would take us. At least we had lights. Many of the cars and trucks along the way either had none, or were not using them. Some had lights obviously long since smashed.

One truck had a load of steel rebar so long it was hanging at least fifteen feet off the end of the trailer, dragging on the pavement and sending up great showers of sparks. No wonder the roads needed repair.

The departure area of the terminal proved to be modern and quite nice. I became well acquainted with it as our flight left seven hours late due to heavy fog.

While waiting in the airport lounge I talked to an English couple who had toured India. They said that the best city they had ever visited was Jerusalem. The mayor there had been in office twenty-one years. He was up at 4:00 every morning to make sure people did their jobs. He had started out insisting that all new buildings be made of Jerusalem stone, and in twenty-one years that had had quite an impact.

At 7:50 the lady who was keeping us informed came around making an announcement in Hindi.

“Does this have something to do with the Gulf Air flight?” I asked.

“Yes, go to gate three for security check.” Gate three was separate from the other eight. I joined the long cue which snaked down a corridor to the side. Hand luggage was put through a machine; I hoped my lead film bag was still good. I was frisked lightly. My bag was set aside for checking, but when I identified it as mine they just stamped the security label and handed it to me.

I read John le Carré’s *The Tailor of Panama*, a book I had bought in Philadelphia six weeks before. Then at 9:31 the cabin crew paraded in. A good Oman? No, I would not get a laugh with that pun.

At 10:31 we began to push back slowly, and we taxied out by ourselves, revving for takeoff fifteen minutes later after we covered the distance to the domestic terminal from which I had flown to Jaipur. Gray smog lay over Delhi as we climbed into a cloudless sky.

I set my watch back to 9:16, Muscat time. Breakfast was served quickly. Given a choice between vegetarian and omelet I chose the latter. With it came boiled potatoes, kebab, fruit, a roll, croissant, butter, “Suite Heart” mixed fruit jelly from New Delhi, and a selection of coffee, tea or soft drinks, and water. It was announced that in the Sultanate of Oman we would not be allowed to eat, drink or smoke in any public place until sunset, due to Ramadan.

However, that turned out to be a misstatement. When we landed we were asked to go to the transfer desk for further arrangements. They gave us transit visa applications which all the London passengers, at least, completed. We got our passports stamped, went through security and boarded beautiful new vans. They took us to the Novotel and gave each person or family a \$100 room. We had an excellent buffet lunch in the hotel restaurant; they were happy to serve non-Muslims. The food was incredibly good.

Joe Elder from the University of Wisconsin and I took a taxi to Muttrah, where Faiq proved to be a big name, as in Faiq Money Exchange and Faiq Jewellery. I thought the name might present a problem for the tourist trade.

On returning to the hotel we had another great Omani meal. Meat dishes were prepared in garlic, peanut and olive sauces. Nothing was spicy but everything was tasty.

It was overcast, rainy and dismal at Heathrow Airport in London. Aboard our United Airlines 777 I set my watch back another eight hours to 5:15 a.m., Los Angeles time. India seemed a long way in the past. We took half an hour to gain cruising altitude at 36,000 feet, and it was announced that we were expected to touch down at 4:41 p.m.

I slept for hours, waking up for the meal and the second snack. An hour before arrival I opened my shade and saw the snow sprinkled mountains of California below.

While I was in Jaipur our City Council voted 4-0 to oppose the Newhall Ranch development planned next to the Ventura County line. I had spoken of it in a very mild manner when I first learned of Newhall Land's plan. I was astounded by the magnitude, which had never been apparent to me even though I had seen the Farming Company's maps of planned development. I was concerned about the water supply, although it seemed to me that because Santa Clarita was upstream we had some natural advantage. The implications for traffic were huge, although with careful planning and development there might not be too much impact on us. My mild approach to the project as Mayor in 1996 was a deliberate attempt to avoid a fight until we had had time to consider all the facts. Had I been in town for the meeting I would have joined the majority to make it a 5-0 vote in opposition. I had a lot of concerns, the greatest of which was over the county's planners to consider all the aspects of the plan and do a great job on it.²

With two open seats, the council race drew a large number of candidates. Jo Anne Darcy was the only incumbent running for reelection, but Clyde Smyth's son Cameron was running for his father's seat. Cameron had experience as a member of State Senator Pete Knight's staff, and had political ambition. I suggested that he temper his plans for the future with the thought that if he concentrated on doing a good job in the present things would work out. Cameron ran well, but lost, winning a seat in 2000. Marsha McLean was a credible candidate for the slow growers. Marsha had done some fine work for the city lobbying in Washington, and had the good sense to work with all kinds of people in a positive way. Laurene Weste was my appointee to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and had done a magnificent job. I supported her candidacy by mailing out several hundred letters at my own expense. Frank Ferry, a teacher at Valencia High School, had a background somewhat similar to mine.

Kent Carlson had written a lot of letters to *The Signal*. Dennis Conn and Ed Stevens had run previously. Dave Ends had been involved in a big, but limited, way. Mike Egan, a young student at Valencia High School, seemed to be in it for

the experience, which was a good idea. Student Ryan Krell, Mario Matute, Bob Nolan, Jeffrey O'Keefe, Greg Powell, Wendell Simms and Chuck Simons were all people I had never met more than once.³

There are a number of reasons why people run for a city council. Such a race used to be popular with lawyers before they were allowed to advertise and had to file financial statements. Lawyers loved the publicity they got almost as much as that they got when running for judge. Some people actually expected to win. Others ran because they wanted a forum for their ideas, or because they wanted to be positioned to win if lightning struck the favored candidate. A few had dreams for the future, and wanted the exposure to publicity that might help them later. These candidates might not campaign seriously, knowing they could not win, but might hope to attract positive attention at the candidates' nights and gain support for the next election effort.

On January 27 we considered an amendment to the adult business ordinance. No one on the council wanted any adult businesses in town, but the Supreme Court rulings had limited the power of city government to exclude them. Our existing ordinance had been tested previously in other cities, and worked. However, it seemed that some councilmembers were looking for an expensive fight. Clyde Smyth moved to require all previously existing adult businesses to adhere to the restrictions on future applicants for licenses. The courts had already voided such a requirement in Simi Valley. The impact of any similar action would be to leave the city without any effective ordinance for at least weeks.

I understood Clyde's argument. He was concerned that an adult business would be established in the unincorporated county territory and then be grandfathered in when that area was annexed to the city. There were proponents in support of the ordinance attending council meetings regularly. However, Mayor Jan Heidt and I voted in support of the city attorney's position during the vote on the first reading, and again when the ordinance was adopted on February 10. It went into effect thirty days later, but is unenforceable.⁴

We voted unanimously to quash my proposal to renumber all the addresses. When the issue came up on the agenda of January 27, Glen Becerra of Southern California Edison and a council member in Simi Valley, testified that the electric utility would have to spend \$2.6 million to change their billing system. I was floored when he said that. I could not believe that Edison would have to manually enter every address change, or that entering perhaps 75,000 addresses would cost \$2.6 million. If each address change costs almost \$35 to make, no wonder electric bills were so high.⁵

I gave up easily, without disputing Edison's testimony, because the issue was becoming too emotional. People did not want to listen. I had felt that it would be worthwhile for the city to spend the taxpayers' money to paint new address numbers on all the curbs, allowing the people seven years to mark their bills and magazine subscriptions for the change. Many of us had numbers on our houses. We could keep the old numbers on the house for seven years; when the people come to repaint the numbers on the curb give them the new number; mention the

address change in our holiday letters, and be done with it. Indeed, most people move within seven years and people moving in could have simply started out using the new number.

My proposal would have caused no printing cost; people had to get new letterhead and business cards because of the area code change. What it would have done was said to Los Angeles County that we are independent, someday we will be a new county, and we do not need to be numbered according to downtown Los Angeles. Otto Von Bismarck had unified Germany by getting the German states to use a unified currency, which made the German people think they were German instead of Prussian or Bavarian. I wanted to use house numbers to create Canyon County in the minds of our people. I knew that if the people of our valley believed they could be free they would be free.

I had seen this happen in Russia. I was not thinking about the tyranny of Communism, but I was thinking about the tyranny of living under a "local" government run by five supervisors, who, once elected, could never be turned out of office. That's the way it is in Los Angeles County, where there are 2,000,000 people per supervisorial district and the special interests provide whatever it takes to keep in office the devil they know, rather than allow it to be taken by the devil they do not know.

There was another way for me to deal with the county problem, but I was not willing to pay the price of not being able to look at myself in the mirror each morning. I could have ranted and raved like Howard Jarvis did about Proposition 13. Think about it. Who was he when he got started? Pretty soon I would have attracted a bunch of kooks and some special interests, and with a little luck I could have destroyed Los Angeles County. We could have petitioned for a state constitutional amendment to allow a split of the county. The people in the rest of the state would have loved it. I could have been all over the newspapers and television, and probably could have drawn a really nice salary from the proposition committee like the other guys riding on the coattails and the memories of Paul Gann and Howard Jarvis.

The failure to change house numbers has left an unsolved problem of a practical nature. People in business waste a lot of money advertising where they are, buying a bigger ad or putting up a bigger sign to help people find them. They spend a lot of time on the phone telling people where they are, after spending the money to advertise their phone numbers so people will call and ask for the location. How many times does the average person repeat their five-digit number when giving their address to people? It would really be easier to take the time to change the number than to spend all those extra moments in the long run. How many people have caused fender benders because they are not looking where they are going because they are trying to find an address?

I asked for bigger street signs with numbers on them. I wanted the new street signs to show the city logo and numbers. That has not happened. I wanted owners of buildings to put their numbers up so we could see them from the street. For the most part, although it is required, it has not happened. If the street signs

had numbers people would eventually figure out the system, and then people could know where 23920 West Valencia Boulevard was without having to be told that it is city hall.

I suppose the house numbering flap led to my nomination for the most controversial newsmaker of the year, but against Jill Klajic I did not stand a chance. All I had been trying to do was make people think.⁶

We had accomplished something far more important by forming our city than possibly setting in motion more long-term changes in government. Santa Clarita had been the catalyst in the formation of the Santa Clarita Woodlands State Park. A thousand years from now the City of Santa Clarita might not be recognizable, but the green belt between the Santa Clarita and San Fernando Valleys will still be there.⁷

John Boston wrote a column saying that if he were a councilman in Santa Clarita he would force his fellow politicians to require every person in the valley to adopt the middle name "Cougar-Mellon." If he could do that, he could change the house numbers, and give us our own county. Good luck to him.⁸

Sharon Bernstein wrote a great article, "Secession Trend a Natural Evolution," which somehow made it into print in spite of the editors of the *Los Angeles Times*. Senator Pete Knight had introduced a bill to break the Antelope and Santa Clarita Valleys away from Los Angeles County. The bill was not going to go anywhere, but it was the steppingstone for a journalistic tour of the dreams of people in the San Fernando Valley, the Harbor, Venice and other places reacting to a problem described by Kevin Starr, a USC historian and California State Librarian. "If you live in a city that's so big that whole sections don't feel that they're a part of it, you don't have a sense of well being." He went on to speak of a growing sense that there is a growing sense nationally that we "ought to live in a federation of local communities, governed not from the top down but rather in a sort of web from town to town."

William Fulton said, in his book *Reluctant Metropolis*, that some government needs to be decentralized while other functions need to be handled at the regional level. Kevin Starr reminds us, "In ancient Greece, if standing in the...public square at the edge of the crowd you could not hear the orator speaking, it was time to create a new city. In the course of American history, Kentucky broke away from Virginia, Maine was created from Massachusetts. We formed whole states out of other states when people felt that they belonged to something else."⁹

Senator Knight introduced a bill to include the Victor Valley of San Bernardino County and parts of eastern Kern County into a new county with a million people. It was too specific, and too much of a dream. Having been through new county formation, I knew this would be an impossibly monstrous task. We could not get the voters of Los Angeles County to approve letting us go. The Victor Valley was unsuccessful in its effort to form Mohave County. How could we get the voters of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Kern Counties to work together to let us go? Who in Santa Clarita really wanted to be a part of High Desert County, stretching from the Newhall Pass to Arizona?¹⁰

Mike Antonovich came out against Pete Knight's bill. Mike was trying hard to do an impossible job, but never understood that smaller could be better. One time he remarked that if we split Los Angeles County into seven parts we would have to duplicate the big jail in downtown Los Angeles, Twin Towers, six more times. His myopia concerning reform did not allow him to see that each county would have far fewer prisoners, and might be willing to contract for housing them.

However, Antonovich made one point well. The counties' financial structure is dysfunctional. The state can still put unfunded mandates on the counties, and the state can take funding away from all local governments with virtual impunity.

George Runner had taken a poll on county formation. He sent out 50,000 forms. 598 were returned. 458 supported splitting Los Angeles County.¹¹

The *Times* editor must have been on vacation, because on March 1 Scott Harris did another thought provoking piece, "Putting Secession on the Map." He did not endorse it, but he did say, "the complaint that Valleyistas make about L.A., the city – that it's just too big – is triply true for L.A., the county. And although Valleyistas point to the Santa Monica Mountains as a great geological barrier, this is a speed bump compared to the San Gabriels. In the San Fernando Valley, people sometimes say they're going 'over the hill.' In the Antelope Valley, people bound for L.A. say they are going 'down below,' which sounds more like hell than the City of Angels."

Los Angeles County will be split. The only questions are when and how. If the split comes sooner than later it will be less painful, and cleaner. If it comes later it will be because the people governing California did not do their job, and left it to a Howard Jarvis.

On March 24 the council approved apartments with tandem parking in a new complex on the corner of McBean and Magic Mountain Parkways. Jan Heidt and I had put the question on the agenda after the Planning Commission had approved the project. Ultimately I voted for the project on the grounds that people had to be able to afford to live somewhere, and people who work in Santa Clarita should be able to live here. Jill Klajik joined Jan Heidt in voting no. We also extended the term of the homeless shelter opening because of El Niño.

AB 303, by George Runner, had established the Los Angeles County Division Commission, provided that it could find support and funding by the end of 1998. This involved a process of having two or more jurisdictions comprising more than 2,000,000 in aggregate population declaring their intent to form such a commission, which would need about \$1 million to do its job in a two-year period. I brought the issue to the Council, which allowed me to put it on the agenda, and passed it unanimously.¹²

On April 4 we broke ground for Central Park, sharing the chore with a bunch of kids who would really use it.¹³

April 14 was election day. Deborah Haar wrote in *The Signal*, "Santa Clarita residents who are registered voters – all 72,977 of them – have the opportunity today to flex their electoral muscles today by voting..."¹⁴

Only 19.2% of the voters, or 13,837, did vote, but that was at least better than 1996. 5,848 voted by mail. Jo Anne Darcy led with 7,129; Frank Ferry won a place on the Council with 6,583, and Laurene Weste took the other spot with 5,770. Cameron Smyth, who with Ferry had been endorsed by *The Signal*, placed fourth with 4,826, while Marsha McLean garnered a healthy 4,531. The others were also rans, although Wendell Simms polled a respectable 2,079 on a small campaign, but Mike Egan, the Valencia High School student, did get a respectable 918 votes, and was probably responsible in part for the higher turnout.¹⁵

As Deborah Haar put it, “the really poignant moments on Tuesday occurred when outgoing Councilmen Carl Boyer and Clyde Smyth had an opportunity to remark on their years on the council....

“Boyer was rewarded for his service by having a new street in the proposed Santa Clarita Business Park named after him. (Although there is no truth to the rumor that the addresses on Carl Boyer Drive will be no more than five digits.)”¹⁶

I remarked privately to Gail Ortiz that I thought it was a real honor. She retorted, “Don’t hold your breath until it gets built.” I burst out laughing.

Granddaughter Kylene Plummer had another chance for fame. Her picture appeared on the front page of the *Santa Clarita Sun* in May, with Chris and me, but she was identified as Denise.

A week later I retired from teaching, went to my retirement dinner, and caught the red eye to Baltimore to visit my father. Since then I have served a two-year term as president of Healing the Children, which has done work in eighty-eight countries. I have seen some of my students do very well. One became an anchor on KNBC, Channel 4. Another is the President of the Los Angeles City Council. A third served as a member of the State Assembly before his election to the Los Angeles City Council. Others have been mayor of San Fernando. Indeed, at one moment every single public office holder in the San Fernando High School attendance area who had attended public school between 1963 and 1998 had been my student.

Maybe that is how reform in California will come about. Maybe Diane Diaz, Alex Padilla, Tony Cardenas and the others will finish the job.

There is a very simple reason for that record at San Fernando. I trashed the curriculum in Government class. I went to the back of the book and taught the last two chapters, the ones on local government, for as long as it took. Once it took twelve weeks. Then I handled the three chapters on state government. Then we skimmed the twenty on the federal government. After all, what does the federal government do for you every day? A national corporation does deliver your mail.

It is local government that keeps the streets safe, and educates your kids, or forces you to send them to private school. Except when some mad person convinces nineteen hijackers to kill a lot of people the rest of it does not really matter.

¹*The Signal*, Jan. 3, 1998.

²*Daily News*, Jan. 15, 1998.

³*The Signal*, Jan. 22, 1998, and *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 23, 1998.

⁴*The Signal*, Jan. 28 and 30, and Feb. 11-12, 1998.

⁵*The Signal*, Jan. 29, 1998.

⁶*The Signal*, Feb. 1, 1998.

⁷*The Signal*, Feb. 2, 1998.

⁸*The Signal*, Feb. 12, 1998.

⁹*Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 24, 1998.

¹⁰*Santa Clarita Sun*, March 1998.

¹¹*Daily News*, Feb. 20, 1998.

¹²*The Signal*, March 26, 1998.

¹³*The Signal*, April 5, 1998.

¹⁴*The Signal*, April 14, 1998.

¹⁵*Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1998; *Daily News*, April 19, 1998, and *The Signal*, April 16 and 22, 1998.

¹⁶*The Signal*, April 22, 1998.