

Cell site back to nature

Something Exciting Happened in Trinidad

Wednesday, June 15, was a great day in Trinidad — at least for some current and former residents of this seaside village. The cell towers were removed from Trinidad Head. Many of us thought this day would never come.

The cell towers (consisting of two wooden poles bedecked with various antennas and cables, a metal walkway, an outbuilding on a concrete pad, all surrounded by chain-link fencing topped with barbed wire) were erected in 1997. They were located on the part of Trinidad Head owned by the City — an area zoned Open Space. City ordinances do not permit commercial development in Open Space zoned areas. So they should never have been allowed there in the first place.



ANTENNA ERASED The former cell phone tower site, now open space. PHOTO BY CINDY LINDGREN

The original lease agreement between the City and the cell phone company allowed them to operate for 20 years. That period was extended for five years through a series of short-term lease extensions since 2017.

The cell phone companies (there have been several over the years) submitted various proposals to the City seeking permission to expand the size of the facility. One company (U.S. Cellular) approached the City in 2005, requesting permission to construct their own facility adjacent to the then-existing site, which would have included a 400-foot steel lattice tower with a blinking red light on top.

Our small group, known as the Friends of Trinidad Head, felt this unsightly com-

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mercial facility did not belong on scenic Trinidad Head. Our efforts to remove the cell facility and return Trinidad Head to its natural state have been ongoing since 2005.

Over the period of 17 years, our small group of concerned citizens, through letters of opposition, public comments at various Planning Commission meetings, an appeal to the City Council and, finally, an appeal to the California Coastal Commission, was able to thwart the efforts of these multi-billion dollar telecommunications companies from adding a second cell tower facility and expanding the existing site on Trinidad Head.

You can't blame the cell phone companies for wanting to locate their facilities on

hiking around the Head at the same time a utility truck was roaring down the road with the remnant poles en tow. For us, this is a pretty exciting moment!

I would like to thank members of the Friends of Trinidad Head and the many others who were an important part of this effort, including Aldaron Laird, Kim Tays, Mareva Russo, Brad Twoomy, Cindy Lindgren, Victoria Sackville, Brian Rosen, Kathy Bhardwaj, Erin Rowe, Don Allen, Jennifer Kalt and several members of the Tsurai Ancestral Society and Yurok Tribe.

Many thanks to the California Coastal Commission, including the wonderful, late Peter Douglas, for believing in our mission and upholding the Coastal Act to allow for the restoration of this beautiful headland.

Sincerely,
**Stan Binnie
Arcata**

The rest of the story

Daniel Duncan is certainly entitled to his opinion and his personal taste in architecture (*Letters, Union, June 15*). And the *Mad River Union* has generously provided seemingly miles of ink to allow him to express his ideas. Sometimes I have gotten all the way through his meanderings. And sometimes I have even agreed with him.

However, his belief that the City planning process should be used to impose his and perhaps a handful of other's subjective and narrow opinions on the rest of his fellow Arcatans is where we part ways.

In response to his latest screed bemoaning one of Arcata's leading architects and A Street's newest homeowners, I feel the need to respond. Especially when he misstates the facts behind the city approval of the A Street homes.

Unfortunately his viewpoint reflects a syndrome among some in Arcata that has previously successfully driven away a goat farm proposed for land zoned exclusively for agricultural use and defeated a badly needed student housing project.

Contrary to Mr. Duncan's point of view, these new homes were designed to fit into the existing neighborhood. Not to mimic a historic style in some Disneyesque way, but to put forward a contemporary design that fits in with the diversity of styles around them.

Mr. Duncan has apparently not noticed that the homes surrounding those he is criticizing were built during widely varying time periods, featuring widely varying styles from a flat-roofed modern to Victorian.

Further, the bulk, heights and setbacks of the two new homes match that of two

other adjacent historic homes including the house immediately next door to the south.

Mr. Duncan inaccurately calls the project a "subdivision" and therefore claims that the homes were improperly exempted from CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). As was pointed out repeatedly in the city staff report and at the public hearings, and contrary to what Mr. Duncan and project opponents claim, the project was *in fact* made possible by a Lot Line Adjustment, which *reduced* the number of building lots from five to four (and thus the density of the project), therefore legally exempting it from CEQA.

Mr. Duncan also states that if a handful of people (in this case 10) show up to oppose a project the Planning Commission and City Council should somehow feel obliged to kill it. He fails to mention that there were also people from the neighborhood who showed up to SUPPORT the project as a desirable improvement to the vacant lot which was then covered with invasive pampas grass, trash and abandoned vehicles.

And what about the thousands of Arcata residents who weren't at the hearings but have an interest in more housing, environmentally responsible infill development and well designed buildings? I suspect the Planning Commission and City Council had the interests of the entire City in mind when they approved the project and turned down the appeal.

As for my wife Cindy and me, along with the Cypress Grove goats, we have been driven to McKinleyville. After years of effort and hundreds of thousands of dollars toward building on the third lot on A Street, we decided that we were better off selling the lot and crossing the Mad River and moving up the hill to Arcata's stepsister to the north.

While the nasty neighborhood opposition was only one of a number of contributing factors, after 50 years as a proud Arcatan I am now a McKinleyvillite.

I have nothing but admiration for the tenacity and determination of the owners of the two new homes for persisting in getting their homes built. But unfortunately, Cindy and I needed to move on.

I deeply love and care for Arcata, but the active resistance to change and the often unwelcoming attitude among some in Arcata is a real threat to the otherwise yeasty, University town diversity that makes life here so special.

**Wesley Chesbro
McKinleyville**

P.S. We're just 10 minutes from the Arcata Plaza. Maybe I can still call myself an "Upper Arcatan?"

A retired carpenter, looking back on his legacy

The fix is finally in, after more struggle than expected

In my dentist's office there sits a piece of carpentry done by me that I would like to disown, but can't. Whenever I am assigned the middle room of his office, I am forced to gaze at The Palpable Evidence as if the chair has been positioned to face the precise spot where the bad piece of carpentry sits in plain view.

Exhibit A is a 4-foot long section of quarter-inch round wood trim that runs along the sink countertop. At the intersection of trim and the corner of the room, a wide gap appears (occasioned by bad sheetrocking) which could have been corrected with a little creative re-fashioning of the piece.

At the time I did it, or didn't do it, I was probably just tired at the fag-end of the workday. As I walked back to my truck to put away my tools, I can hear myself mumbling to nobody in particular, "A little piece of imperfect carpentry doesn't matter, especially in a dental office where everyone, dentist, assistants, patient, is focused on the client's mouth." Using such logic, I managed to weasel out of going back in and fixing the errant trim piece, then forgot about it. I probably figured nobody, would notice it.

No such luck.

Every time I go in there, the big fat gap in the corner glares back at me, and I can't put my responsibility for the mistake to rest because I know.

One day, while waiting in the chair, the dentist comes in and I point out the shoddy piece of work, offering to fix it. He glances briefly at the spot, non-plussed, then turns and says that he doesn't know what I'm talking about. "It looks fine to me," he says.

"Yeah," I manage to get out before he rams one of his tools inside my mouth, "you wouldn't treat somebody's teeth like that, would you, leaving a big hole?"

He throws me one of those

smiles he keeps in reserve as a weapon that never fails to work, featuring a set of gleaming perfect white teeth, and then he proceeds to grind away at the current victim sitting passively on the chair, in this case, a geezer in unmistakable decline, whom he intends to restore to perfection, or as close as he can get to it, even though we both know it's a lost cause.

The unsightly piece of carpentry happened years ago when I remodeled his office and we traded services instead of money. It was one of my last jobs before I retired. Now was the time to make it right, I figured, before the hard won skill of carpentry goes into irreversible decline along with everything else.

At my next cleaning appointment, I learn that the Boss is on vacation. Just the opening I was looking for. That gives me all week to do the job without the interference of patients, attendants and the Main Man lurking about wondering what I'm doing there with my tools.

I procrastinate the rest of Monday.

On Tuesday, I drive down to the dentist office, look the job over, take off the offending piece of trim.

On Wednesday I carefully make a new piece of trim to fit the spot, paint it.

On Thursday I charge up my finish-nail gun. It won't shoot. I can't telephone the tool repair shop because my cell phone service is out. I drive up there, walk across the showroom floor, nail-gun dangling from hand.

The millennial sales clerk, emerging from a tool aisle, stops, glances at the gun and emits the phrase, "Wow, I haven't seen one of those in years!"

I don't know whether to feel proud or ashamed. I feel both alternately.

As I walk back into the repair shop, the service man in coveralls looks up, stares down at the gun I put on the counter and shakes his head sadly. "I threw away my last battery for that model just a few days ago."

He picks up the gun, examines it like a museum relic. "I can't even get parts for this thing anymore." He fiddles with battery connectors, makes the gun fire, hands it back.

"I only need it for three nails," I say to him.

"That much you've got left in there," he assures me.

"You mean the nail gun or me?" I say with a grin, proud of my geezer joke.

I walk back through the showroom floor looking for the sales clerk in order to wave my still-working nail gun in his face, but he is no where to be seen.

I show up at dentist office at 4:30 p.m. with functioning equipment, put the new piece of trim in place, shoot nail.

Nail splits piece. *Now what the !#%%! am I going to do?*

Today is Thursday. The office worker doesn't work on Friday. The head honcho will be back on Tuesday. Monday is a holiday.

The office worker, Kayla, a high school friend of my daughter's, takes pity on me and tells me she has to come in tomorrow, Friday. She needs to make the calls that she couldn't make today because the phone service was down. Good. We arrange to meet midday.

Meanwhile I have to figure out how to make a new trim piece, paint it, and install it with my archaic equipment in the one hour

I have to complete the project.

I go back to my workshop, decide to glue and clamp the existing trim piece which the gun-nail split, instead of making a new one. I do that, then fill the nail hole. I plan to hand-nail the trim since the nail gun might split it again.

I don't know if I remember how to hammer. I search in five different outbuildings before I find my finish hammer which has started to rust. I don't have any finish nails. I threw them away years ago when I bought my finish nail gun. I make some finish nails by cutting off the heads of three thin galvanized nails I have lying around since it's ridiculous to go to the hardware store for three finish nails.

Now, to drill some pilot holes. The last thing I want to do is split the damn thing again. From drill toolbox I open the lid and lift out the tray, set it near the edge of the work bench, peek down into toolbox for the bit index.

My glasses fall off. While stabbing to catch the glasses I knock the tray containing screwdrivers and bits and other connectors onto the floor. Stuff scatters everywhere.

I put on the glasses upside down, take them off, put them on right. No drill index. I kneel down to pick up the scattered tools, feel something pop loose, hear the clunk of whatever it was sliding under the work bench. I ignore this and pick up the tools and put them back in the tray. When that is done I look under the workbench to see my yellow/black tape measure buried in heap of sawdust and cobwebs.

It had squirted loose from my tool belt when the flab from my gut squeezed it out while bending over to pick up the tray. You fat ass.

I go into the toolroom for my other drill toolbox, bring it into workshop, open the lid. The lid falls off (the plastic hinges are worn out). The drill index lacks one bit, but has the bit I need.

I drill the holes, fiddle with toolbox lid, work it into position and hammer the hinges back into the slots (with my newly found finish hammer; I'm starting to make progress), refasten the lid and carry the toolbox back into the toolroom.

While walking across bridge between shops, a short 2-by-12 plank placed there to navigate the 3-foot space between buildings, the plank gives way, falls abruptly down a few inches onto the rotten skid sitting on the concrete slab below, incurring a soft landing, the horizontal load having obeyed gravity solemnly without even a vibration.

I, standing on a plank, am still vertical though at a lower elevation, requiring me to step up about a foot onto the floor of the toolroom to put away the toolbox.

The fifth day in, I head down to the dentist's office. Kayla meets me at the door and lets me in with a big, encouraging smile accompanied by raised eyebrows. We both want to get this done before the Boss comes back and continues to enforce his uncompromising standard of perfection on every mouth in the world.

I'm thinking I can get the sucker in place with two nails instead of three. No use wasting a nail. But the third nail was needed and reluctantly I used it.

I stand back to inspect my work, half expecting to find another blemish. Can't find any.

It took five days for a retired carpenter to do a job that a young one would have pulled off in about an hour.

Will the dentist notice the fix when he gets back from vacation? Probably not, since he didn't notice the "before" or care much about it.

I will, though. Every time I sit in that chair and, gazing into the corner, ponder a world with one less flaw in it.

It's enough to make a geezer's day. I mean week.



❖ THE FUTURE OF ARCATA
Daniel Duncan