



MY BEST SHOT

by Lisa Ross

www.lisaross.com

MURPHY MORPHS FOR MAYOR

The morphing of Dick Murphy into Navarro-lite in this year's mayoral race is a clever political sleight-of-hand that has certainly given his underdog campaign traction among disaffected groups suffering from San Diego City Council fatigue.

But, as former Vice-Presidential candidate Lloyd Bentsen might have said, I knew Peter Navarro, and Dick Murphy is no Peter Navarro.

For those new to San Diego, Peter Navarro was a Rebel With A Cause, founder of Prevent Los Angelization Now (PLAN), the quintessential outsider who came from nowhere to almost beat Susan Golding for Mayor in 1992 because of voter discontent over suburban sprawl. For almost a decade he tortured San Diego's establishment with bare-knuckled land-use fights and several "almost made it" runs for public office.

Ironically, the Navarro phenomenon was the result of San Diego City Council policies in the era of Dick Murphy, whose tenure on the City Council included a spectacular swing vote in favor of the mega-sprawl La Jolla Valley development project southwest of Rancho Bernardo, four times the size of today's planned 4S Ranch, and 20 miles away from any city services. Then-Mayor Roger Hedgecock warned that the project would destroy San Diego's new growth management plan.

So bad was this City Council decision, the very next year San Diego voters took the planning authority for the 12,000-acre area between Carmel Valley, Rancho Penasquitos and Rancho Bernardo away from their City Council by approving a ballot measure that forced developers to go to the voters for plan approval, which they did over the next 15 years to great effect.

I suppose one might call Murphy the George III of Growth Management in San Diego.

Murphy now says that he regrets the vote, and there is good reason to accept that he wishes he had not done it. But, it's hard to ignore the sentiment behind this particular pull of the lever.

The San Diego Union Tribune quoted Murphy at the time as saying that he "might have voted differently" if the university proposed for La Jolla Valley had in-

cluded a secular university instead of one owned and operated by Campus Crusade for Christ, a fundamentalist organization that pulled out the lobbying stops in support of the development.

"All universities are positive influences-educationally and culturally," Murphy told the San Diego Union, "But a Christian university is more likely to provide more moral and spiritual benefits to the community than a secular university."

Some reason to throw out San Diego's growth management plan and stuff 25,000 homes and an industrial park into an area serviced by I-15 and I-5.

Today, Murphy has used the controversial Sorrento Valley Road closure issue in Del Mar to gather support from environmental groups that have sued the city to keep the road from re-opening. This is the same Murphy who, while chairing the Citizens Advisory Council for Mission Trails Park, supported building a 6-lane highway through one of the most pristine areas of the park. Three lawsuits, six years and a half million of taxpayer dollars later, the \$91 million boondoggle project was stopped.

You can morph, but you can't clone. Last week, the New Murphy let the Old Murphy creep out of the bag during an interview with the San Diego Union-Tribune editorial board, who let us know that he supports Miramar Marine Corps Air Base as an option for a new international airport.

Could the new smart-growth Murphy really be talking about covering all that endangered habitat with concrete? Does he really believe that I-15 and I-5 can handle any more traffic? Does he really think 747s flying in over Scripps Ranch and out over La Jolla, Carmel Valley and University City 24 hours a day will preserve our quality of life?

Murphy explained that actually building an airport there is unlikely, but he also supported turning over that important decision to an "independent airport authority insulated from electoral politics" (meaning all of us voters), according to the editorial. Some populist.

Voter antipathy for the going's-on in the San Diego City Council has intensified the yearning for an outsider to take the place of Susan Golding. All morphing aside, there is no outsider candidate running for San Diego Mayor this year.