



MY BEST SHOT

by Lisa Ross

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**REDISTRICTING GAMES:
THE RANCHO SANTA FE CHIP**

Nothing beats redistricting for bringing out political game players. Who could blame them because this once a decade ritual where political turf is sliced and diced and masticated according to new census data often determines the life expectancy of incumbent office holders.

So far, the leader of the player pack is Supervisor Bill Horn who has turned the redistricting process at the Board of Supervisors into a Monopoly game—he wants to swap his Escondido with motels for 3rd District Supervisor Pam Slater's Fairbanks Ranch and Rancho Santa Fe.

With or without motels, Escondido couldn't be further from the interests of the rest of Slater's present district, which includes largely Republican but greenish coastal areas like Del Mar, Carmel Valley, Solana Beach and La Jolla whose very self-protectiveness has prevented them from going the way of Horn's Escondido, Vista and San Marcos with roads, strip malls and density housing.

And, by proposing the Escondido-Rancho Santa Fe swap, Supervisor Horn has raised the stakes in a redistricting game that if successful, could mean the end of the pro-choice and environmental Pam Slater's career by replacing a significant base of support with a far more conservative constituency less likely to vote for her and far less able to fund another campaign.

While Horn has taken a beating so far from columnists and political reporters over his trade offer, he is the Board Chair and if recent incidents at the Board of Supervisors are any indication, he could get support from enough other vindictive supervisors bent on slicing off some of Slater's most loyal campaign contributors.

And, they are loyal contributors because Slater represents them to the max, including opposing new highways through Rancho Santa Fe, supporting 3rd District values like the arts and education, and keeping truck traffic off San Dieguito Road.

While state and federal districts will be decided by a Democratic controlled legislature, in San Diego, Supervisorial and City Council districts were turned over to non-partisan commissions charged

with ensuring that districts are drawn to the benefit of constituents, not incumbents or political parties.

Although the final district lines have to be ratified by the Council and Board, a commission in full public view makes for a much cleaner process.

And, up to now, the redistricting commissions for the County and the City are doing their jobs, drawing their suggested district lines according to the rules articulated in a series of Supreme Court rulings: congruent geography and voter interests without regard to such things as racial composition or incumbent donor bases.

For example, under the current proposed plan for the City of San Diego, Council District 1 which includes Carmel Valley, Sorrento Hills, Del Mar and Del Mar Mesa, will lose part of Mount Soledad (about up to the street where Councilmember Scott Peters lives), keeping the SR56 corridor together by retaining Rancho Penasquitos. By cutting steeply into Peters political base in La Jolla, Carmel Valley, Del Mar and Rancho Penasquitos pick up clout by numbers.

Of course there are miles to go before ratification of the new district boundaries by City Council and the Board of Supervisors, and most certainly some incumbents and special interest groups will try to trump the game.

Under the current scenario, newly elected environmental activist Donna Frye who must run again next March, will lose her entire Pacific Beach base to District 2 and pick up the more conservative areas of Claremont, which is likely to create a fight from Greens and Labor Unions. And, Hillcrest will be united into one district, solidifying the Gay and Lesbian community base in District 3, something that conservative groups might challenge.

But, no redistricting proposal this year matches Bill Horn's for raw gloves-off political gamesmanship with its tortuous geography that would attach Rancho Santa Fe and Fairbanks Ranch to the 5th Supervisory District by a thread, and attach residents of those high-end areas to Bill Horn with a gold chain.

The County Board of Supervisors will decide whether to swap Fairbanks Ranch and Rancho Santa Fe with Escondido for the next decade on July 10 at 10:00AM. This is a proposal that should not pass Go.