



## MY BEST SHOT

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### CROATIA AND THE CARMEL VALLEY WEEK WARS

I spent the past several weeks traveling the calm waters of Croatia and Crimea. With the exception of a conspicuous US warship parked off Dubrovnik, this was a very peaceful journey among congenial people.

And so, waking up in war torn San Diego felt like I had downed three cans of Jolt at one time. The Balkans cannot hold a candle to San Diego on the friction between factions front.

From the take-over of the traditionally conservative San Diego City Council by city employee labor unions as a result of the District 6 election, to a campaign to recall City Councilman Byron Wear, to the Carmel Valley Weed War that has some residents screaming for secession, rebellion and overthrow are in the air.

And, San Diego is also about to host a Seattle-style protest spectacle the week of June 24 when the largest convention of international Biotech companies, Bio 2001 meets here.

Animal rights groups who'd like to free "Shamu," along with everybody's family dog, can't wait to come to a city whose de facto logo is Shamu. Radical environmental groups like the Earth Liberation Front who specialize in burning down bioengineering laboratories have put Torrey Pines bio engineering labs and the ACLU on full alert.

But, no amount of revolutionary frenzy down the way can beat the thrill of a secession movement in our own backyard, an idea that pops up from time to time in Carmel Valley when people feel underrepresented, underserved and over taxed by city government.

In this case, the issue is weeds and the notion of secession can spread faster than the pesky plants.

On the surface, weeds might seem a bizarre reason to embark on a long and extremely complicated secession process—the good people of La Jolla,

Rancho Santa Fe or LA's San Fernando Valley could talk volumes about the expenses alone. But, Staten Island successfully pulled out of New York City for reasons less defined but just as deeply felt.

Intractable and unsightly weed patches in the medians and along sidewalks in a community with arguably the best public landscaping supported by the highest landscape maintenance fees in the city has been a vexing issue since the beginning of Carmel Valley time, a pure reflection of jurisdictional and planning dysfunction.

In some cases, the weed patches along the sidewalks inexplicably belong to homeowners who either do not realize that they own the areas behind their brick walls or do not feel motivated to maintain them. In others, weed infested properties hang in legal limbo due to the bankruptcy of one of Carmel Valley's original developers.

Finally, Carmel Valley's 1975 Community Plan required preservation of natural open space before anyone understood that islands of disconnected open space would not fare well over time. Now, some of that space is an attractive nuisance for litter, doggy poop and unscheduled sleepovers.

Pulling out of the City of San Diego would solve none of these problems—a new city could not make homeowners care about their community, force a bankrupt developer to fix the mess he left behind or easily change natural open space regulations. In fact, a new city simply becomes another government entity with an insatiable need for income.

But, it is reasonable for people to object strenuously to any increase in the landscape maintenance fees (aptly called MAD fees) until satisfied that the City is making real progress toward resolving the issues that prevent uniform and cost-effective landscaping in Carmel Valley.

How nice it is to be back in peaceful San Diego.