

## Chapter 20

### INSIDE ELSMERE CANYON

The story of the fight against Elsmere Canyon dump needs to be told apart from the normal run of events in the history of Santa Clarita.

I do not recall exactly when we became aware of the county's plans to site a landfill dump in Elsmere Canyon, part of which was owned by BKK Corporation, but it was sometime during the process of discussing our proposed boundaries with Ruth Benell at LAFCO prior to incorporation. She made it clear that we could not have any part of San Fernando Road east of the Antelope Valley Freeway in the city because of the dump planned for Elsmere Canyon, which was east of the Antelope Valley Freeway in the pass between Santa Clarita and Los Angeles.

Both Fred Bien and George Carvalho were made aware of the proposed dump, but it did not make the news in a significant way until about nine months after we incorporated. On September 22 I urged the council to go on record as asking landowners in the vicinities of Towsley and Elsmere Canyons if they would be willing to sell to our city. The Sanitation Districts were going to offer options of \$10,000 per acre for land in Towsley Canyon. At the time our yearly budget was \$13 million, and we did not know how much land we could buy, but Jan Heidt agreed, "It's time we stood up and said, 'Get off our backs.'"

By that time I had been commuting from my home near Calgrove and I-5 to San Fernando High School for twenty-two years. I admired the beauty of Towsley Canyon, and had written a number of letters to park officials in 1969 suggesting that it be purchased as parkland. I knew that the vegetation on the pass was lush because it rained more there than anywhere else for many miles around. Much of our ground water came from Elsmere and Towsley Canyons. Years before our valley had fought a proposal to put a dump in Towsley, and had won. The formation of the Santa Clarita Woodlands State Park had already been proposed. Perhaps we could buy land, turn it over to the state, and get our money back.

One benefit of cityhood was the fact that we were given two of the three seats on the Board of Directors of the two sanitation districts located in our valley. This made us privy to information we might never have had otherwise.

We knew that residents of the Los Angeles westside had convinced Supervisors Mike Antonovich, Deane Dana and Ed Edelman to oppose a landfill in the Santa Monica Mountains. "Out here we're just hard working folks, and I'm tired of getting jerked around," Jan added.

My motion passed 4-1. Mayor Buck McKeon said, "If we want to get in a fight with the county on who can buy the most land, we'll lose." Jill Klajic naïvely said that we should start annexing areas that might become dump sites. At that time, however, none of us knew how difficult annexing land could be. In January 1988 our request for a sphere of influence over Elsmere had been denied.

Early in September Mike Antonovich had suggested that the City of Los Angeles might give us the old Saugus Rehabilitation Center if we did not oppose a dump in Elsmere.<sup>1</sup>

Although we had a small staff, we had the press and the public working to find out as much as they could about plans for more dumps in the Santa Clarita Valley. It was not as if there had been none. Chiquita Canyon landfill was scheduled for expansion in the Val Verde area. There was a dump on the Wayside Honor Rancho grounds. The Sunshine facility was just over the hills towards Granada Hills, partly in the county and partly in the City of Los Angeles, with plans for growth to the north.

*The Signal's* Sharon Hormell wrote of Congressman Howard Berman's bill, H.R. 4496, which would have facilitated a complicated swap of land to give BKK control over U.S. Forest Service land, making Elsmere a viable dump. Berman's legislation would have required the City of Los Angeles to give up land in San Francisquito Canyon owned by the Department of Water and Power. Sharon reminded us that the reason Los Angeles did not need that land was that it had not been used since the St. Francis Dam burst in 1928, killing hundreds of people in our valley. That had been the second worst disaster in the history of California. Nobody expected the dam to burst, but when the dump proponents suggested that "impermeable liners" would protect our groundwater I reminded them of the St. Francis Dam. I suggested that they contract to replace our water supply with their water if their dump fouled our water. They never got back to us on that proposal in spite of a number of reminders.<sup>2</sup>

Sometime during this period the offer of the Saugus Rehabilitation Center land was discussed. Our city attorney, Carl Newton, advised us to negotiate. Only by negotiation would we learn more about the proposed dumps and how serious they were. Negotiation would also give us time. If we cut off discussions, the lines would be drawn, and our chances of losing would be very great. We negotiated. When Los Angeles people talked about that 500 acres in the heart of Saugus we said that its value represented only a small part of the profit BKK would enjoy out of Elsmere Dump, or the savings in tipping fees the Sanitation Districts originally wanted to enjoy in Towsley.

When the offer of acreage became public we said it was nice, but not enough. When Santa Clarita was offered tipping fees we sounded like Judas, but said that the thirty pieces of silver were not enough. And we took the heat. Jill Klajic, who had done wonders for the campaign to get petitions for cityhood signed, and in doing so had built her own political machine, lambasted us in *The Signal*. She made it sound so simple. "The City of Santa Clarita can always buy the proposed park land, after all, what can the City of Los Angeles do with 500 acres of agriculturally zoned property totally surrounded by another city." She pointed to the money we had. "With 147,000 people, and a \$21 million budget with a \$9 million surplus, we are the seventh largest city in population and third largest in size in Los Angeles County.

"We have a great deal of political clout....

“We do not need two more landfills. We do need a city council that...will ‘Just Say No!’”<sup>3</sup>

But we did not just say no.

On the same page appeared my article, “Open-minded approach to SCV dumps needed.” I wrote, “If we are to be an effective force in determining regional policy, we must take an open-minded approach to problem solving without immediately displaying the ‘not in my backyard’ attitude.”

I whined about the problems the dumps would cause, but said if we did not site some dumps our valley would fill with our own trash because there would be no dump to which we could take it. I reminded the readers of New York City garbage being sent by ship to Africa, only to be refused. I cited rising disposal fees.

I advocated a swap of land. I talked about new technology. “It would be a great pity to lose Elsmere and Towsley Canyons, or even one of them, to landfill use, but even a greater crime to refuse to negotiate and wind up with the problem unsolved and our entire valley trashed.”

I had to take the heat. A week later Bob Grunbok sliced and diced my article in the way it deserved. I felt lucky that more people did not write letters, but of course no one came to my defense.<sup>4</sup>

Mayerene Barker speculated in the *Times* that we would support an expansion of the Sunshine landfill to take some of the pressure off Santa Clarita. I was quoted as saying, “We are approaching the garbage crisis. We know that recycling will not be enough.” Muriel Ussleman and the Santa Clarita Civic Association endorsed recycling, as did Jill Klajic by letter. However, supporting Sunshine was not a good move. Talk of it bought time. We did not want to lose Mary Edwards and the North Valley Coalition, who were potential allies. Mary Edwards said, “We don’t want communities to be pitted against communities. This is such an important issue we can’t afford to be provincial. We have to work together. We all breathe the air, we all drink the water.”<sup>5</sup>

Mary Edwards was a stateswoman. She apologized for threats by people in Granada Hills to picket Buck McKeon’s stores. Don Mullally spoke of the canyon as Significant Ecological Area #20, and of the need to avoid a landfill war. The debate centered upon whether Santa Clarita would wait for publication of the Environmental Impact Report before we would take a stand.

We had to.

In spite of the number of times we criticized Mike Antonovich for saying he would wait for the EIR before taking a stand, we were learning to say the same thing. Our advice was to wait, stay officially neutral and protect our credibility in the eyes of the courts. Someday we might have to be able to testify that we negotiated in good faith, and came out against the dump because of the Environmental Impact Report.

Meanwhile we began to negotiate the purchase of the Saugus Rehabilitation Center, on which Central Park and the Castaic Lake Water Agency facilities were later built. Those negotiations were abruptly derailed when members of the Los

Angeles City Council found out about them. When asked whether it was because of the landfill problems, we played dumb. "I don't know whether that's tangled up in the landfill or what," I said. Jo Anne Darcy admitted that it was a possibility, and expressed her frustration that Los Angeles had cancelled a scheduled meeting between the Los Angeles and Santa Clarita city councils.<sup>6</sup>

On February 1, 1989, Buck McKeon and I went to a meeting with the sanitation district and county public works people downtown. We were conciliatory. "Basically what we're saying is, 'we realize you have a problem. But we have a problem too,'" I told the papers.<sup>7</sup>

In 1989 Howard Berman introduced a bill to put Elsmere in the hands of the City of Los Angeles. On this issue BKK became an ally of Santa Clarita to the extent we were on the same side of the lines. The proposed deal was that Los Angeles would swap several parcels of land it owned in California and Nevada with the United States Forest Service for Elsmere. Hal Bernson surfaced as a key backer of the Elsmere dump proposal. He was responding to the efforts of Mary Edwards and the North Valley Coalition against Sunshine.

The Council appointed Buck McKeon and me to be the committee to testify against Elsmere. To some extent we had been doing that already, in part because the two of us found it natural to put our school board experience to work in negotiating and giving testimony. One of the problems was that sometimes we would slip and appear to be adamantly opposed to the landfills. That was not sticking to the plan.<sup>8</sup>

Nor was it fun to stick to the plan. A letter by Angie Haines mentioned a possible recall against Buck McKeon, Jo Anne Darcy, Dennis Koontz and me. The day that letter was published was my wife's birthday. I was glad she was not aware of it at the time; I had taken her shopping in Paris. We could not afford the luxury of European travel, but by chaperoning groups of students in exchange for places on the tours we managed a few trips.<sup>9</sup>

The city and the Castaic Lake Water Agency began to work on the idea of a joint purchase or condemnation of the Saugus Rehabilitation Center land. Ultimately the CLWA condemned the land on its own. I was disgusted by that unilateral action, but hindsight suggests that perhaps it was best. CLWA knew how to get the money, and Los Angeles could not defend against a condemnation for a water system.

Meanwhile we were preparing to take our testimony to Washington if that was necessary. We commented on the need for better information in the Environmental Impact Report on Sunshine Canyon landfill.<sup>10</sup>

Hunt Braly, then Senator Ed Davis' Chief of Staff, and I toured Sunshine Canyon one Saturday as guests of Browing-Ferris Industries, known as BFI. I believe Don Mullally and Laurene Weste, among others, accompanied us. I was appalled at what I saw. This was private property so we did not invite the masses to go look for themselves, but we walked down gorgeous paths under the cooling shade of big trees that few even knew existed. When the Regional Planning Commission held a public hearing on November 2 I did not hesitate to offer my

strong personal opposition, as did Laurene Weste. BFI had lied about the 7,200 oak trees they admitted would be destroyed; these trees were twice as old as the forty years they had said, by actual count of the rings of a tree which had been split in a storm. They proposed to replace them with 17,000 “trees” in little pots.<sup>11</sup>

Laurene Weste put her argument well. “I know you to be responsible planners. You are responsible for the lives of people in a county, that if it were a country, would be [a large] nation....

“SEAs were set aside by the county...as the best of the best. They cannot be duplicated or replicated. When they are gone, they are gone forever. The desecration of a forest sets a precedent for developers...to violate an SEA, to say that it does not matter.

“If this were a few trees, it would be a different story.

“This is not a few trees. This is a closed canopy oak forest. It is rare. If you need a landfill, you should not take a forest to do it.”

I said it was a “moral imperative” to take a close look at railhaul to Eagle Mountain.

Dr. Joan Sander, a dentist, criticized the EIR as containing a one-day study of the wildlife. Chris Chen mentioned that when he moved to Granada Hills he could see the stars, but with Sunshine as a neighbor he could see the plastic trash bags which had blown off the landfill hanging from his lemon tree. Sadly, he may have seen stars again when the Regional Planning Commission delivered a knock out punch to common sense.<sup>12</sup>

On November 15, the “state agency,” LAFCO, turned down the city’s bid for a 160-square mile sphere of influence. Steve Padilla of the *Times* wrote, “LAFCO’s action, which shocked Santa Clarita officials, was a victory for Los Angeles County sanitation authorities who wanted to prevent Santa Clarita from gaining a voice in the debate over Towsley and Elsmere canyons, sites of two proposed garbage dumps.” I could not understand at the time why LAFCO did not simply cut down the city’s request, but by cutting it down they might have revealed the reasons for the cuts, the influence of the sanitation districts, certain developers and Magic Mountain.

The common wisdom was that LAFCO could not be sued for its actions, but since then I have often wondered if a civil rights action in federal court might not have great merit. I could not see how LAFCO was carrying out state law evenhandedly. Los Angeles County LAFCO was certainly dependent upon, and heavily influenced by, the county. At the time its offices were immediately outside the door of the Chief Administrative Officer of the county.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly we had been handed the message, “lay off Elsmere.” This was the meeting in which the atmosphere was so hostile that Ruth Benell suggested that we could put our topographical map “in the parking lot.” Even LAFCO Chairman Thomas Jackson called the lie to the idea that we should not have a sphere because we did not have a general plan. As I put it, we had taken a gamble, and lost.<sup>14</sup>

On November 17 I wrote a memo to Carl Newton, asking when we could come out against Elsmere dump. I waited months for a reply, ever so patiently, because I did not want to exert any pressure which might compromise the professionalism of an opinion.

The situation began to look very bleak. On the 21st the Board of Supervisors gave negotiators permission to work out an arrangement under which the City of Los Angeles could develop and operate an Elsmere landfill. John Green wrote in *The Signal* that this paved the way for the Los Angeles city council to approve a deal which would grant Santa Clarita thirty acres of the 520-acre Saugus site and five cents a ton of the tipping fees. According to Walter Hamilton, the *Daily News* reporter who covered occasionally our lobbying efforts in Sacramento, and Dan Boyle, who teamed on the story, Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Officer Richard B. Dixon said, "We need to chat some more with Santa Clarita, but the concept has been agreed upon. The City of Los Angeles will negotiate in good faith to provide land for a park and a civic center to Santa Clarita and to compensate them with a portion of the tipping fees."

This made it look like the council was betraying our city's interests before the EIR was published. I wished that I could find the letter printed in the Valley Edition of the *Los Angeles Times*, in which an official of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power had criticized a suggestion that the dump be located on the south side of the San Gabriels because it would pollute Los Angeles' water supply.

When asked, I said, "I think it stinks to high heaven." I had to remember to stick with the official view that we were negotiating. "It's an arrogant attempt to dump on us without any significant compensation that would help solve the problems that have been created here in the past."

We had been offered, at one time, 520 acres and a dollar per ton of the tipping fees, but L.A. Deputy Mayor Mike Gage denied that, calling it "absolute highway robbery and beyond anyone's wildest imagination, except for somebody in the City of Santa Clarita, I guess." In fact, we had been led to believe, in private meetings with the opposition, that they could agree to that amount.

Buck McKeon revealed, "I don't know what's happening. I hope Mike [Antonovich] is representing us. We're his constituency."

I blustered, "We'll hold them up in court until landfills are totally passé." Even if we did agree to compensation, we could still attack the EIR if it was unacceptable.<sup>15</sup>

Late in November the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority bought 145 acres at the mouth of Towsley Canyon, in a move which was a surprise to us. It had been kept confidential; there were too many who could not keep a secret. This was a real win, because the Towsley proposal had been for a 3,200-acre dump compared to 1,500 acres in Elsmere. On coming back from the National League of Cities conference in Atlanta I met with Bob Cochran, then an aide to Congressman Carlos Moorhead, and later with Buck McKeon. For the first time I began to think there might be some help from Washington.<sup>16</sup>

On January 5, 1990, Denis Wolcott of the *Daily News* was able to piece together a story that began to reveal the real position of the city council.

Despite continuing pressure to take a stand on the proposed Elsmere Canyon landfill, City Council members said they would risk legal problems and a loss of bargaining power by prematurely discussing the issue.

Santa Clarita City Attorney Carl Newton advised council members at Wednesday night's meeting to refrain from publicly commenting on the controversial proposal until an environmental impact report on the landfill is formally released.

"How we respond to the landfill is difficult because it is outside the city limits and even outside our sphere of influence," Councilman Dennis Koontz said during Wednesday night's study session. "What we want to do is respond in a way that will accomplish an end...."

Santa Clarita Councilman Carl Boyer III said refraining from comment also will put the city in a better position to respond to any possible legal challenge filed against the proposal.

"We're in a very precarious situation on what we can say. We could put this city in a real mess in the long run," Boyer said. "I think the only place to get a fair hearing on this is to go to federal court."

But the council's silence on the issue only irked the landfill's foes.

"By remaining silent on this issue, you are giving tacit approval," said John Castner, co-chairman of the Elsmere Canyon Preservation Committee.... "People think you as a council approve it. People have been taking jabs at us, and you need to make a stand...."<sup>17</sup>

It was people like John Castner who made not taking a stand tough. I was quite willing to ignore criticism from a lot of gadflies until the cows came home, but John Castner was solid, hard working, and on the basic issue he was right. Before that study session he had led a candlelight vigil outside city hall. The very tone of the vigil was one of a calm statement of right against wrong. On the way into the council meeting I had walked around to the front of city hall, past the silent demonstrators, and said quietly to John, "I want you to know that I am glad you are doing this. There are some things that have to be done which the council can't do right now."

John Castner moved out of town sometime later and I lost track of him. Years later, on November 7, 1997, I saw him at former Assemblyman Phil Soto's rosary, and was able to tell him we had won the battle. Phil Soto had been a Latino political pioneer and his wife Nell was of a six generation Pomona family.

Staff drew up two possible resolutions for adoption by the council at some time in the future. The first resolution flatly opposed any dump. The second resolution approved one if it was environmentally sound and if the opposition could meet eighteen of our demands. Those demands included 12% of the tipping fees, the entire 583 acres of the Saugus site, and a guarantee of our water supply, as well as a seat on the joint powers agency running the dump.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile I had been pushing for heavy public use of the new Towsley Canyon Park. The first Saturday in January was a beautiful day for the more than one hundred who turned out for the first public tour, led by Don Mullally. Hunt Braly, Dennis Koontz and I were there to tell the public of the support we needed to make sure it stayed a park instead of becoming the entrance to a dump in Towsley Canyon. I felt good. These people would spread the word about the gem of a park building in the Santa Clarita Woodlands.<sup>19</sup>

We found out that an Environmental Impact Statement would be required prior to any transfer of federal lands for use in Elsmere dump, and this began to raise my hopes. Joe Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, was unabashed about being on our side. The Conservancy moved quickly to take advantage of new legislation allowing the Santa Clarita Woodlands State Park, which was still largely a dream, to be part of the Rim of the Valley Corridor trail, which had a lot more legal standing.<sup>20</sup>

Marsha McLean helped the Council by going after the California Disposal Association, which had made Elsmere sound like a “done deal” in its newsletter. In response to her complaint, the association retracted the statement. We needed Marsha’s apolitical approach at a time the election season was underway. Joe Edmiston said our best chance was an act of Congress. Little did I think that act would be authored in the future by my colleague on the city council, Buck McKeon. In the meantime we began to work more closely with Carlos Moorhead, R-Glendale, and Elton Gallegly, R-Simi Valley, who shared our area at the time.<sup>21</sup>

While Steve Padilla of the *Times*, on January 22 credited the entire council with being individually opposed to a dump, the pressure was beginning to build. Dennis Koontz said, “We know we’re vulnerable.” The Elsmere Canyon Preservation Committee had collected 1,600 signatures on a petition against the dump.

Several hundred people attended the council meeting called for January 24 to allow input on the dump. Testimony was overwhelmingly and fervently opposed to Elsmere. “I think they gave the council some clear direction,” said Marsha McLean.

However, four of us maintained the city’s position. “If we were to oppose it, the city may lose its representation. I don’t see why the city should spoil its position,” I said.

Dennis Koontz explained, “The approach that people were asking for is an idealistic approach. You can’t just say ‘no.’”

Public opinion was naïve; it was not our decision to make.

The EIR was due to be released in “two or three” months, not in time for the election. However, Jo Anne Darcy, who with Koontz and I had to run for reelection in April, stuck with the city’s stand. The audience erupted into loud applause when asked if they would be willing to see the city put \$1 million into a suit. Darcy said she will fight the dump only after the EIR is released and warned that legal action would take \$3 to \$5 million dollars.



Only Jan Heidt cracked, saying she wanted to come out against the dump right away. However, a week later I went public with a proposed resolution opposing any dump in the Santa Clarita Valley, having received two legal opinions on January 29 that indicated we could take action. I said, "We have more latitude so I expect the whole council wants to exercise it." One of the opinions came from the environmental arm of Burke, Williams and Sorenson at the request of Carl Newton, and had been researched painstakingly. With it he returned my note of November 17, which had requested the study of our position. Marsha McLean and Kaye McCown, a geologist, expressed delight. Committee member Dinah Sargeant said she suspected my proposal was politically motivated. I was certainly glad to be able to change my public position before the election, and if I had to take the heat for a unanimous council action that was okay with me.<sup>22</sup>

I pushed for invoking federal law in demanding that Los Angeles County turn over missing data that led to the selection of Elsmere Canyon as the top choice for a landfill site in the county. "It might be better to see in detail why Elsmere was rated No. 1. I'm sure some of it was determined by political expediency." We made a Freedom of Information Act request for the background information, which was never found. I did not expect it would be.

Jill Klajic was pushing hard to make Elsmere the big campaign issue. Andrew Martin, with his characteristic bombast, had said in his campaign statement, "Andy will kick L.A. out of Elsmere Canyon. I will not wait for an (environmental impact) study." Buck McKeon, who could afford to take the wait and see attitude publicly, did just that.<sup>23</sup>

John Medina, our Director of Public Works, issued a report to the council that stated that existing water studies did not reveal the direction from which water flowed underground from Elsmere. Two studies, done by Richard C. Slade for the CLWA, had determined the amount of available water supply on an annual basis. We pushed for the water interests to join us in studying the question of direction. We knew the answer, but we had to be able to demonstrate some credibility. We eventually agreed to help fund \$10,000 to hire Slade to compile a checklist of the factors which should be found in BKK's report.<sup>24</sup>

On February 13 we came out in formal opposition to an Elsmere landfill, with Jan Heidt working for a four-part resolution which would provide a strategy. It was estimated that by opposing the dump we would lose \$70 to \$110 million in tipping fees. I said, "We're not going to sell out for any amount of money." Not a soul uttered a word bemoaning the loss. Then Senator Davis introduced SB 2139, a bill which would have given us real leverage. It did not have a chance to pass, but gave us another platform before the legislature.<sup>25</sup>

By mid-March the growth issue dominated the election campaign, and all the candidates were in favor of recycling.

On the last Sunday in March a dozen of us, led by Don Mullally, Laurene Weste and Jim McCarthy, and accompanied by Carley Worth, a volunteer naturalist, hiked into East Canyon, which BFI had said it would donate for park

land on the approval of the Sunshine expansion. It was a beautiful day, and we saw streams flowing in spite of four years of drought, making it all that much more obvious that the ridges between Los Angeles and Santa Clarita were the source of our ground water. I could imagine heavy rains and water sheeting off the landfill into our valley.<sup>26</sup>

Senator Ed Davis' efforts in Sacramento were making progress in the Senate Local Government Committee. He had modified his bill, SB 2139, to simply require that the California Waste Management Board review the Elsmere proposal. After the council meeting on April 24 I flew to Sacramento. "I basically made a real low-key pitch that what we are looking for is an honest broker, namely the state, to review this." The opposition said simply they were opposed. The aging lobbyist was described to me as the most powerful in the capital. I assumed that meant he had contributed a lot of money to candidates and knew where the skeletons were buried. I was also planning a trip to Washington to testify against Howard Berman's HR 998.<sup>27</sup>

We spent a lot of time in closed session talking about Elsmere. The law allows closed sessions concerning pending litigation. Whenever anyone complained about our meeting in secret I shuddered. We could not fight a war while telegraphing our every move. The opposition was either private industry, not accountable to the Brown Act, or governments also meeting in closed session. On June 25 the city sent a delegation of ten to Sacramento on a Pacific Southwest Airlines group ticket to lobby. They got a taste of what we had faced. It was valuable experience for the community members in the group, including Allan Cameron, Marsha McLean and Chip Meyer. Chip lived outside the city. The Assembly Natural Resources Committee was the Davis bill's first stop on the Assembly side. It needed seven votes to get through the committee, but got only two. We were trying to fill a gap left by AB 939, a comprehensive waste management bill, which might allow Elsmere to be approved without normal review. Jack Michael, lobbying for the county, said, "Elsmere Canyon is not going to fall through the cracks."

Lloyd Connelly, D-Sacramento, joined Marian La Follette, R-Northridge, in voting for us. Connelly said, "If [Davis] is right in any sense, then this law makes sense." La Follette represented Los Angeles, but batted for us. However, Dominic Cortese, D-San Jose, had AB 2296 going through the process, and we had hopes we would get the main points of SB 2139 into AB 2296. Chip Meyer and I stayed over and worked the halls of the capitol on Tuesday, an expensive move because the plane tickets for the group were about \$760 total, and our two one way tickets home the next day cost \$504.<sup>28</sup>

I spent the following Monday in Sacramento as well. In October we finally decided to hire a governmental relations officer full time. That was a great relief to me. Mike Murphy was glad to come to us from Senator Cathie Wright's office. We enjoyed a long hiatus from the Elsmere battle, and became convinced that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which had failed to appear, was a problem for the proponents.

In February of 1991 Tim Whyte quoted my comment as Mayor, that our relationship with the county was improving. Supervisor Mike Antonovich agreed. Without Elsmere to contend, things were better. We began to take the initiative at the federal level in March, in connection with the National League of Cities congressional conference. This was the one trip on which I took my wife Chris, at my expense. With us were Jo Anne Darcy, Jill Klajic and George Carvalho. We talked to three congressmen and representatives of Senator Alan Cranston. I was horrified when Jill exploded at Elton Gallegly, "You politicians are all alike!" Elton was indeed sitting on the fence, but I did not want to have anyone push him over to the other side.<sup>29</sup>

More than two hundred of us went out in support of a Sierra Club rally in support of our Elsmere efforts. I was disappointed that the crowd was so small. Some had come from as far as Whittier to help. Whitney Canyon was also a subject of conversation, with Karen Pearson reminding us over the years that it was threatened as a dump neighbor, or with development, or with use as a off-road vehicle park. Little did we know that in 2001 we would own it.<sup>30</sup>

In Santa Clarita we had celebrated Earth Day, but in 1991 I was privileged to proclaim Earth Month. Jill Klajic spoke for all of us, "The City of Santa Clarita is especially concerned about the environment since we are being targeted as the garbage capital of California. We need to take a leadership role and educate not only our own city, but Los Angeles County and California as a whole."

Pat Saletore, a leader of the anti-Elsmere force, was reaching out to the school children. We knew that if we could reach the kids they would get to their parents. Pat had eighteen mini-landfills going at the schools to show the kids that "stuff which is recyclable [does] not deteriorate."<sup>31</sup>

In April Joe Edmiston pronounced Towsley dump dead. The Conservancy had purchased 273 acres. Joe relished taking bolt cutters to a gate marked "Restricted Area, Keep Out." The public could enjoy a total of 450 acres in the Santa Clarita Woodlands.<sup>32</sup>

Jill Klajic volunteered to represent us on the Los Angeles County Hazardous-Waste Management Committee, if we could get her elected. As Mayor I held a seat on the City Selection Committee of Los Angeles County. We had four seats to fill, to represent the smaller cities of the county. I had attended League and Contract Cities meetings at the county level faithfully, and knew the players. I went to work. Fran Pavley, the founder and then Mayor of Agoura Hills, who had helped us in our incorporation campaign, nominated Jill. There were seven candidates for four seats. Each city, regardless of size, had one vote. Alhambra Mayor Boyd Condie received 45 votes, Jill and Councilman John McTaggart of Rancho Palos Verdes both received 38, and Councilman Mike Mitoma of Carson won a seat with 35 votes.

Jill had nothing to do with her election, and knew little about the League, but said, "It's been an old guard-type block organization for many years, and they pretty much voted the party line, except they elected me. It sort of means to the

city of Santa Clarita that we have arrived.” I was mortified. I hoped word of her remarks would not get back to the very people whose support we needed.<sup>33</sup>

In May Ken Pulskamp and I made the long drive to Whittier Narrows to lobby L.A. County Sanitation District No. 2. Our presentation included rail haul as an alternative to landfills in the county, and pointed to the concentration of landfills in the area of the Northeast San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. Bradley West, Chiquita Canyon, Lopez Canyon and Sunshine Canyon were existing dumps. We did not mention the Honor Rancho. At the time Grace Phan, a supervising engineer with the district, said the Elsmere EIR was expected to be out in June. Rolf Janssen of the City of Bell stepped up to support us. Charles Carry, the chief engineer of the sanitation districts, said he would get back to us. Chuck ran a tight ship, and since the board members of all the districts had little contact with staff, he was in a powerful position. The other board members would wait and see. Every step we could take to slow things down was being taken. In the meantime our city budget was growing, and setting aside a million a year to fight Elsmere was manageable.<sup>34</sup>

One of the ideas I kept pressing in Washington was that the Department of Agriculture was going to have to think about how much a dump operator would make if federal lands were traded to BBK or the governments opposing us. I was trying to get an appointment with high officials in the department so I could make my pitch. It was not easy.<sup>35</sup>

My term as Mayor ended in December 1991. We still had no Elsmere EIR.

Buck McKeon’s announcement that he was running for Congress just before Christmas provided a boost in morale. The 1990 census had put Santa Clarita in the center of a district including the Antelope Valley and some northern parts of the San Fernando Valley. All Buck had to do was beat Phil Wyman, whose political strength was in Bakersfield (which was not in our district) in the Republican primary.

When Bonny Block of *The Signal* asked me how I felt about Buck running, I grinned and said, “Better him than me.” I had been to Washington so many times I kept a Metro card in my wallet, and knew I would never like the commute. I had made another trip at the end of December, and had finally, with Buck McKeon’s help, gotten in to see Ann Veneman, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and John Beuter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources and the Environment. Rufus Young, who worked the environment with Carl Newton’s firm, accompanied me, telling me not to say anything about my term as Mayor having just expired. The appointment had been made when I was mayor and if they wanted to think I was still mayor that was all to the good. People in Washington do not understand the constant turnover. Even though Ann Veneman was from California I stayed mum. I did not tell the press that I had gotten an indication that the Forest Service was not eager to trade land to BKK or anyone else. The BKK people also read the newspapers.<sup>36</sup>

During this period we were attempting to gain control of the Santa Clara riverbed, which was in private ownership. The Trust for Public Land was one of

the agencies wanting to act as the intermediary. I knew they had been involved in the effort to do a land swap to put together the Elsmere dump. In the council meeting I said, "The word 'trust' makes it appear it is for the public welfare, and they have been involved in landfills, and I feel that is unfortunate. We need to send a message by considering very carefully whether we want to do business with them." I did not reject them outright because the president of the American Land Conservancy, which was also vying for our business, had been involved in the Elsmere swap in a prior job. No, I did not research all these people. Marsha McLean, Karen Pearson and other members of the public kept feeding me lots of information.<sup>37</sup>

Mayor Klajic did not bother to go to the National League's congressional conference in March. I lobbied on my own, without worrying about any outbursts. This time it was the Environmental Protection Agency and Senator Seymour's office that got the most attention.<sup>38</sup>

Congressman Howard Berman (D-Panorama City) brought his Elsmere bill, HR 998, back up for consideration, and wanted our support, with the idea that we would seek relief from the worst parts of the bill through the hearing process. Since it was all bad, the council voted to oppose it, which was a more effective move than what some had suggested at the meeting, that all city voters should vote for his opponent in the next election. Not one of our voters was in Berman's district.<sup>39</sup>

In face of the prediction that the county was going to run out of landfill space in 1994, we were pulling out all the stops. We had a video of Elsmere that had been produced for \$3,500, Rufus Young working full time on the legal front, and staff member Hazel Joanes, a city engineer, putting the plans into action. Jill Klajic was touting the council's efforts to a much happier populus. They knew that we had a consultant on hand to inspect the cores of the drilling being done by the people working on the county and federal environmental reports, and that we were doing our own biological, paleontological and cultural assessments.<sup>40</sup>

Pat Saletore, president of the Santa Clarita Civic Association, came to us in June asking for a large appropriation for fighting Elsmere. I was frustrated by the perception that we were not doing enough, and the perception that we were not prepared to spend enough on our effort. When the discussion turned to a specific number, I said, "Appropriate the \$200,000, but don't tell anybody anything else. As far as I'm concerned, when you're at war you don't telegraph to the opposition." I was very concerned that the BKK-county-L.A. forces think this might be all we were willing to spend. We usually kept a million or more in reserve, and could appropriate it quickly if we had to, but why tell the enemy? Anyone who read the papers knew our budget was up to \$54 million. We could no longer poor mouth credibly. The more we could hide, the less prepared the other side would be.<sup>41</sup>

It was tough having to answer to the *Daily News* every time I went on a trip. They seemed to be looking to expose a junket. Not only was I not having much fun, although I put in so many miles on TWA that they began to upgrade me quite

frequently, but I always ran a tight schedule at minimum cost. In ten and one-half years I flew full coach fare only once, and that was because of late notice for me to appear before a Senate subcommittee. The worst aspect of the questions about the trips was the fact that it told the opposition what we were up to, at least in a general way.

If I refused to talk about my efforts, they had no news to report that we were working on the problem. If I did not want to talk about a trip, that sounded even worse. Why was I traveling if I could not talk about it? The papers and the public never worried about BKK making every effort. We were allowed a few months at a time without having to report publicly during lulls. Sometimes I found it better to stir the pot myself, before the press started looking for some other reason to do the stirring. On October 17 *The Signal* reported my letters to candidates for public office at the federal level, pitching the Elsmere problem. My letters were written in consultation with staff, according to a mutually agreed outline. It made no sense for a public official to start writing letters and then leave an uninformed staff to clean up the mess.

Mayor Jill had a different way of writing letters. She had one printed in *The Signal* on October 20. "I am appalled at the decision by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to rename the Towsley Canyon Park the 'Senator Ed Davis Park.' If Sen. Davis contributed to saving this canyon from being turned into a garbage dump, he did so as one of the many hardworking volunteers who collected signatures, donated money, and spent long hours lobbying legislators throughout California.

"Why should we honor this man?" And so on, for over sixteen column inches.

I could not believe the vitriol.

I did not question whether or not she used city letterhead. *The Signal* clearly signed her Mayor Jill Klajic, City of Santa Clarita. This was the senator who had represented us for years with tremendous courtesy, and eagerly sought to move our causes. He had been the only Republican in the state to earn some union endorsements, even if that was more of a reflection on his Democratic opponent. So he had not fought local growth and had supported the No on Klajic efforts when the slow-growth measure went to the ballot. So he had supported adding non-elected directors to the CLWA Board, when there had been no public opposition. He had worked for our parks in Sacramento over a long number of years, and Hunt Braly, his top staffer, had pushed hard at home, with fervor and intelligence. It had been his office that had choreographed much of our city's support for the Santa Clarita Woodlands at a time when we were learning how to answer the telephone.

Yet, the *Times* headline, "Council Dog Fight," on October 29 actually referred to a discussion about barking dogs, the canine variety.

When I told Susan Goldsmith of *The Signal* that I had gotten a response from the White House, Mayor Klajic, who was a registered Republican, said that with the election things might go differently, and that she was very encouraged by Al

Gore's environmental record. I would have said the same thing, if I had gotten a letter from Senator Gore's staff, but I had not. I did not point that out. I knew his staff did not have the resources the White House had to answer mail quickly.<sup>42</sup>

Sometimes the papers got the nuances wrong. Dwight Jurgens' column in *The Signal* on January 20, 1993, was about local reaction to Elsmere. He said that I had attended a League open house function and had made the point of not buying a drink from the bar sponsored by BKK – “and therefore contribute to BKK's coffers” – but found another bar. He had gotten the story from me, but his memory had dimmed. I had bought a drink from a cash bar in the same banquet facility rather than accept a free drink from BKK. I had not made a point of it at the time. I did not put out a press release. It just came up in casual conversation after the fact, and I had raised the question whether I should have taken their drink so they would have had a few pennies less to spend on the Elsmere campaign.

In January 1993 there were changes in Washington. We had a new Democratic administration, our own Republican congressman, and two Democratic Senators. We put Mike Murphy to work at the staff level, where so much gets done. Indeed, in all my trips I worked with congressional staff people as much as possible. They were much easier to see, and much less inclined to be political in their approach to environmental problems.

At the county level life was harder. Terry Dipple, the third-term mayor of San Dimas, had taken a BKK-sponsored resolution to the Resolutions Committee of the California Contract Cities Association, where it passed, 4-1. I was the only member voting against it. The other members were very concerned about their waste disposal problems, and not about their fellow city of Santa Clarita. BKK argued that we should wait until the EIR to take a stand, but worked in favor of getting anyone who would listen to support them “conditionally.” Dipple came across as BKK's lackey, but was out of political circulation not too long afterwards because of legal problems. Had we been unincorporated we would have been out of luck, but cityhood provided us with representation.

Jan Heidt and George Pederson got on the phone and lobbied the entire Executive Committee of the CCCA, and when it got to that level the vote was 11-3 in favor of taking no stand on Elsmere while expressing support of new dumps. I had gone into that meeting with a competing resolution in support of our city, but was very glad that Jim Van Horn, the mayor and longtime council member of Artesia, pushed to get the association out of the divisive question. Jim was an early president of CCCA, a leader in the county who was outspoken, sometimes abrasive, but really had a winning personality. The neutral position carried at the annual meeting in Palm Springs a couple of weeks later, where we had outstanding support from the cities of Calabasas, Lynwood, Pomona and Bellflower.<sup>43</sup>

Those cities helped out largely because of the personal relationships we were building within the CCCA. It helped that I genuinely liked so many of the people, including Dennis Washburn of Calabasas and Nell Soto of Pomona. I had been

involved in the incorporation efforts in Calabasas and Malibu, returning the great favor Fran Pavley had given us during our own struggle, and that helped, too.

I was a part of Nell Soto's quest for a seat on the Air Quality Management District. All the cities in Los Angeles County had a vote on the nomination, and Nell was the popular choice. However, it took ten months and ten rounds of votes to seat her. The small opposition force claimed she was not astute enough to serve, but La Puente's opposition was because she had not supported their delegate, Lou Perez, for an office. Why Bob Bartlett, the Mayor of Monrovia, and influential in the county, stubbornly opposed her, and put up Monrovia council member Lara Blakely as a last-ditch opponent, I could not fathom. Nell was astute enough to serve later in the California State Senate.

Nell Soto averaged sixty votes (out of eighty-eight cities) each month, and most of the cities who did not vote for her were simply absent. Finally, the night before a major vote was to be taken at the AQMD, our efforts to boost attendance prevailed. A determined effort to reach absentees by phone, and a refusal to adjourn the meeting of the City Selection Committee, resulted in Council President John Ferraro of the City of Los Angeles getting out of bed to attend (which he had not done for years), and the representative of the City of San Gabriel to come in and give her the sixty-third vote.

I thought it was shameful that some cities did not make the effort to participate, particularly when the mayors who were supposed to attend could delegate their responsibilities to another council member. Of course the newspapers were totally unaware of what was going on. I wanted to blow the whistle on those who failed to attend, but was concerned about the consequences.

During this period of time Jill Klajic went hiking in Elsmere with some friends. One of the people in the group was a visiting psychic from England, who placed a copper wire around a crystal near power lines, and placed another crystal in another area while meditating over it. Jo Anne Darcy did not like the idea at all. "If I had known about this I would have discouraged it. This makes us look ridiculous. This is kind of going to extremes."

However, she joked, "If it works, I'll send her to Sacramento to fix the budget."

I rejoined, "If this story hits the *National Enquirer*, which I'm sure it will, it will get national publicity about the issue. It gets people thinking about it, that could be positive."

Jan Heidt questioned whether the psychic was working for BKK, but the corporation's president responded lightly, "I can't comment until we've studied the effects the crystals have had in the environmental impact report."<sup>44</sup>

The March 15, 1994, issue of *The Signal* mentioned that I had missed my third straight candidate's forum, the one sponsored by the Santa Clarita Valley Sierra Club. I had not been ducking the forums. I had been in Washington on March 11-15, for the congressional conference, and the next weekend I was attending the Local Government Commission's meeting in Yosemite National Park with Jill Klajic and her guest Skip Newhall.



There had been a time when I had been hoping for publication of the EIR on Elsmere in time for the April 1990 election, so I could take a stand. In April 1994 there was still no EIR, and according to John R. Schwarze of the Regional Planning Commission, it would not be out until October. However, the U.S. Forest Service was holding a public meeting on April 21, 1994. Council members, organizations and individuals had worked for weeks to put on a coordinated presentation, but they told us late in the game that each category of speaker would have to participate in separate parts of the meeting. If we could not all be heard we could submit written statements, which would become part of the transcript.

At the hearing Scott E. Franklin of the county fire department, who had been a major proponent of cityhood in the earliest stages, cited his experience with urban-wildlife fires to make the point that methane from the dump could cause catastrophe in the case of fire. Geologist Joe Cota cited the merger of three faults within a mile of the proposed dump as being capable of ripping apart any liner. Skip Newhall made the point that while the plastic liner planned for the dump was supposed to be bulletproof, the bridges torn apart by the earthquake in January were also bulletproof. Linda Gray the actress, a longtime resident of Sand Canyon, asked, "Why are we the dump capital of the world?"

Lee Schramling pointed out that BKK had been slow to accept responsibility for leakage from a hazardous waste dump into a Covina shopping center. "Who among us would be foolish enough to trust the drinking water of 175,000 people to a company that has not yet exhibited a willingness to care?"

I reminded the panel about the St. Francis dam disaster, and asked, "Are you going to let Los Angeles do it to us again?"<sup>45</sup>

It almost seemed as if *The Signal* had us in their tickler file for an Elsmere story every ninety days, just to keep the issue alive. On June 11 they protested our discussing "pending litigation" concerning Elsmere in closed session. Mike Kotch summed up the hole in their argument. "It's like being in a war. You don't want to telegraph your strategy to everybody." Of course the paper could yell about the right of the press and the public to listen to the city's legal business. We did not have a prayer of attending BKK's strategy sessions. What bothered me was that the newspaper was willing to write about it, and quote their lawyer, Terry Francke of the First Amendment Coalition, but they never explained why they did not go for a court order to get us to stop talking about Elsmere in closed session. They would have had no chance in court.<sup>46</sup>

At least some of the responsibility for the lack of news could be laid on our consultant, Bill Hussey and Associates, who was involved in training city employees and other activities in connection with Elsmere. I did not like paying Bill \$314,800 for a year's work, but then I probably would not have enjoyed being a member of the CIA oversight committee. We approved \$235,800 for "decision maker" meetings. Our budget for the fight was up to a million a year. Some people wanted us to disclose how the public's money was being spent. I did not know, and did not want the council to know. Loose lips sink ships. "I can

see the Associated Press and United Press International try[ing] to get Roosevelt and Churchill to fess up to account of every dollar and pound they spent to defeat the Axis. We're in a war. And we need to win."<sup>47</sup>

The EIR was not released in October after all. In December Susan Goldsmith wrote that it was expected in the next month. We were happy when the Forest Service issued a preliminary decision opposing the plan to take Elsmere Canyon out of the National Forest because of concerns about open space, air quality and the habitat. Of course, the government said, that could all change upon the issuance of the EIR and the conduct of the public hearings. Ken Kazarian projected optimism. He had to. He said he had about \$15-17 million invested in the project, although later we learned it was other people's money. Meanwhile we had lined up technical experts to tear the EIR apart, once it got published.

We appropriated \$226,000 more in January. It was small change compared to the dive in property values we would suffer if we lost, but some people were making lots of money.<sup>48</sup>

The EIR was published on January 13, 1995, about five years late. While citing about twenty environmental impacts which could not be "mitigated" (how I learned to hate that word!), it omitted some obvious ones.<sup>49</sup>

In May our Supervisor, Mike Antonovich, said he would oppose Elsmere unless they could deal with the environmental problems in an adequate manner. I thought this was a significant movement on his part. "I don't know what more he can do," I said. "The majority of the board controls the decisions and you have to take stock of what your power is and play your cards."<sup>50</sup>

Four months later we learned that Browning-Ferris Industries, the owner of the Sunshine Canyon landfill in Granada Hills, was acquiring BKK Corporation and the Elsmere site. Part of the acquisition plan was the establishment of a recycling facility in Azusa. I was cautiously optimistic. Pat Saletore said, "I'm not sure whether to jump up and down.... This has been so long and hard a fight that I don't want to let my guard down."

Lynne Plambeck was thinking of others, and rightfully so, for some of them had come to our aid. "I think it will be distressing to people fighting Chiquita and Sunshine landfills."

Indeed, Jan Heidt and I were the only ones to support Val Verde in their continuing efforts against Newhall Land's Chiquita landfill. I felt we should take a moral stand, but could not find a third vote. George Pederson said we could not be "the champion of every location that wants to get rid of a dump."

"We can't fight the whole world here," said Jo Anne Darcy.

Jill Klajic did not comment.<sup>51</sup>

We had offered six pages of corrections to the Chiquita Canyon Draft EIR.

Then Jo Anne Darcy came out in favor of spending \$7,000 for a report on Chiquita's effect on air quality. We were spending a couple of hundred thousand at a crack on Elsmere, and this would be the first dime spent on Chiquita in support of a little community to which a couple of hundred was a big deal. I said we should have come forward sooner. "The day we didn't was our darkest hour."

I was proud of Yolanda Keymolent and the organization Lucha Ambiental Cumudida Hispanic, which called itself LATCH. Some did not speak English so well, but they did speak!<sup>52</sup>

By 1996, during my second term as Mayor, Congressman Buck McKeon was making headway with his bill, HR 924, to kill Elsmere. It had passed the House of Representatives by unanimous consent in November, and Barbara Boxer was working on it in the Senate. It was clearly a bipartisan effort. While Buck was partisan on some issues, his colleagues liked him, and I sensed that Senator Boxer relished the idea of stopping Elsmere. However, the California Integrated Waste Management Board was a potential roadblock. They held a hearing in San Francisco on Buck's bill. Intergovernmental Relations officer Mike Murphy, Director of Public Works Jeff Kolin and I flew up to represent the city, not knowing what would happen. We did have some support from high officials of the Walt Disney Company, which has a movie ranch near Elsmere Canyon. Lynne Plambeck gave helpful testimony on behalf of the Newhall County Water District. Buck flew out from Washington to defend his bill, and that was a huge plus for us. As we took an elevator up to the hearing room, San Francisco's Mayor Willie Brown, who was in the same car, flashed a big friendly grin at Buck and said, "I wished I'd known you were coming out to my country! I'd have had your visa request expedited!"

Willie Brown had been the smartest man in the State Assembly, but had been the poster boy for the cause of term limits, so many people around the state wanted him out. I was glad he was not taking sides on our issue.

BKK presented Buck's bill as usurping local and state control. Buck said the bill would preserve congressional control over federal land. The Board voted 5-0, with one abstention, to be neutral on the bill. Buck had already met with each member of the board personally. While we suspected that BKK was behind the hearing being held in the first place, Ron Gastelum, BKK's CAO, said, "It's Congress that's going to be acting here, not the state of California."

Governor Pete Wilson's office had joined the fray in our behalf, the result of a meeting with Buck. We were thrilled.<sup>53</sup>

I had been ready to testify before a congressional hearing for months. I got just a few days notice that we would be speaking on March 7. By this time I had given testimony in all sorts of places and under a wide variety of conditions. I was not nervous, but I had no real idea what to expect. I was due to be in Washington March 9 for the League's Congressional Conference anyway. I had a cheap ticket for that, but this would mean an extra trip. I had been away from the classroom too much, and asked Carmen Sarro to book me on the Tuesday night redeye, and if they had to pay full coach fare, beg for a first class upgrade so I might get a little sleep. My ticket cost the taxpayers about \$600 going to Washington because we did not have seven days notice, but the return was \$99, because that part was a full week away. I got the upgrade, but the seat did not recline all that much, and if I had flown coach I could have stretched out in the back.

I changed planes in Newark, got into Washington National, and took the Metro into the city, walking a few blocks to my hotel, where one of our lobbyists was waiting. John Montgomery and John O'Donnell had been hired to represent us on a part-time basis, and were doing a good job. We reviewed my testimony, and rehearsed it, and then went to the Congressional office buildings to lobby every congressman, senator and staff person we could get to see. Mike Murphy and Jeff Kolin were there to represent the city, and Marsha McLean had been sent by the city to represent the public. She was very effective. I was very glad to get some real sleep Wednesday night.

The *Daily News* wrote about our plans to testify before the "Senate Subcommittee on Forest and Public Land Management," calling it "the 11-member panel." The next day we were reported as telling a "U.S. Senate subcommittee chairman" about Elsmere, and Buck was quote as saying, "We had a great hearing in the Senate." They wrote that Santa Clarita Mayor Carl Boyer, Rep. Carlos Morehead, R-Glendale, and Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., all gave testimony. Moorhead and Boxer were not present. They both submitted written testimony. Our friends from Disney, who worked as hard as any of us, were not mentioned.

The *Daily News* depended on reports from staffers in Buck's office, and did not really catch the flavor of what was happening. At the appointed hour on Thursday we went to the hearing room used by the subcommittee. Up front was a high table big enough for all the members. The only member present was the chairman, Senator Larry Craig, a Republican from Idaho. There were some television cameras being used, but I believed they were there simply to make a record of the proceedings. Certainly we would not be on CSPAN or any other channel. A staffer or two accompanied Senator Craig, and after Buck McKeon gave his opening testimony he was invited to sit up front, near the senator.

The staff members had been helpful. They had indicated points we should be sure to mention. We were prepared on all the points, but their help was reassuring. We gave our pitch, Marsha gave hers, and Disney gave theirs. I was blunt. "As each of you can appreciate, national treasures come in all shapes, sizes and forms. We do not believe that an area which was established as part of the first forest reserve in California over a century ago, should now have the honor of being buried under 190 million tons of garbage." Our total presentation had been orchestrated to be quick, to repeat nothing, and to be effective. Then Ken Kazarian and Ron Gastelum spoke for BKK, saying they believed that "the process ought to be allowed to continue. For the legislation to negate that in one fell swoop is contrary to our interests."

The *Daily News* reported, "No vote was taken during the two-hour hearing before Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho." He was the only subcommittee member there, so of course there could be no vote. What I did not know, and no loose lips told me, was that for anything about Elsmere to be in any Senate bill, a public hearing had to be held, and this was it. The staffers would work together to put the contents of HR 924 and S 393 into any vehicle that would allow them to become

law. We had good lobbyists and bipartisan support, and BKK was not in a good position in spite of their millions.<sup>54</sup>

As soon as the hearing was over I went to National Airport and volunteered to be put on the next Continental flight west. I made it home in time to teach a full day on Friday, and then went back to Washington on my previously bought cheap ticket on Saturday. At the congressional conference I got to see Barbara Boxer, who with Senator Feinstein was briefing the California delegation of mayors and council members. I thanked her for her support and written testimony as I walked with her from the briefing to the elevator, and said, "This is one Republican mayor who is going to remember you on election day." She gave me a brilliant smile, a hug, and left.

On March 21 *The Signal* reported that hundreds of barrels of chemicals used to make PCP had been buried at the Pitchess Detention Center (when it was called the Wayside Honor Rancho), and were leaking into the ground water. The cleanup costs might be \$55 million.<sup>55</sup>

On May 31 we had a huge public hearing before the Regional Planning Commission at Valencia High School. We had worked for weeks to turn out a crowd, went door to door with flyers and wrote invitations by hand. Those who were organized to testify for the city were rehearsed several times. While we wrote our speeches ourselves, they were critiqued by Bill Hussey and others, and modified to avoid repetition of points.

Even so I was not sure what to expect. We had been encouraged by the number of community groups helping, but it was not until I drove over to Valencia High School really early, and had trouble finding a parking space, that I knew we had the citizenry really behind us. I had never seen anything like the crowd that turned out.

We filled the multipurpose room and the hundreds of chairs set up outside in front of a big television screen. Many people stood and talked, waiting for their turn to find an empty seat in the hearing room. Chairman Toy and the rest of the commissioners were professional. It was obvious that they, and RPC staff, were impressed with the fervor of our people.

When the evening was over we felt we had turned a corner. Little did we know that the issue would not be decided in Los Angeles County, and that the outcome would be a huge surprise to all.

Later another hearing was held in the same location. This time Ginger Bremberg, a former council member in Glendale with whom I was well acquainted (because of all the League of California Cities, Los Angeles Division, meetings I attended), was the hearing officer. She tried to run a tight ship, but when there was testimony about the opposition running roughshod over the time limits at previous hearings people got testy. Eventually so did I. It was not Ginger's fault. She was just an impartial person chosen to moderate a meeting where people could give testimony for the record. It was important to make points for the record, because in the event of a lawsuit the grounds had to have been put into the record, or the suit would be thrown out.

In late September we heard that Buck's bill was still alive, but it was getting very late in the session for it to pass. We were not privy to all the jockeying behind the scenes, or we would have lost a lot of sleep. Buck's bill, which had passed the House unanimously on November 23, 1995, had been stalled in a Senate committee, but in September 1996 he convinced a conference committee to attach his bill to the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996. Senator Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, held that bill because President Clinton had insisted on deleting some things Murkowski had wanted; in the Senate one member can hold a bill hostage. It was too late in the session to rescue the bill if Murkowski was determined to block it. Senator Boxer went to work, and the result of heavy negotiations over a three-day period was a side agreement between Murkowski and the White House. This resulted in Murkowski's agreeing to let the bill go on without changes, which would have killed it because of the need for House concurrence so late in the session. The bill passed in the final minutes of the session on October 3. I do not believe that BKK knew what hit them. Montgomery and O'Donnell had earned their money.

Barbara Boxer filled in some detail later. Murkowski "threw a wrench in the works" late in the session. Buck McKeon was driving home, and made it as far as Kansas when Senator Boxer called him and said that the bill was in trouble.

She said that Murkowski, a big man, would often just throw his stack of papers into the air, saying, "I don't believe this...I can't make a deal." He was upset that certain logging operations would not be allowed to continue in Alaska. Boxer asked Senator Bill Bradley for help. Bill was an Olympic gold medalist retired from the New York Knicks, and "the only person in the Senate bigger than Murkowski. He was great. When Murkowski would throw up his papers, Bradley followed him out into the hall."

On the other hand, while I was ecstatic I was not sure the war was over. "We still have to solve the problem that BKK owns a lot of land up there. It doesn't eliminate the water supply problems. It just cuts it down. We have to keep working to change regional thinking about garbage disposal."

Marsha McLean said, "It's not over yet. We can't be too careful. I'm feeling we won three-quarters of a victory. We saved our forest. What we have to make sure is they don't use the front portion for a landfill."

"I cried when I got the call," said Jo Anne Darcy. "It's a glorious day and I just pray that Clinton will sign it. But we think he will."

Ron Gastelum of BKK said, "You could move it totally onto private land, but would it be cost effective is the big question."<sup>56</sup>

Bill Hussey was stunned at McKeon's success, and out of work as far as Elsmere was concerned. He had cost us a lot of money, and had raised a lot of local controversy.<sup>57</sup>

I voted for Barbara Boxer in November and she won reelection to the Senate. December 11 she came to town for a public reception for her and Buck put on by the city. Our new mayor, Clyde Smyth, said, "We have two strong voices in Washington and we're very proud of those voices."

Buck was a man happy to joke that we were a bipartisan community, that we had invited all the Democrats, and they were all in the room!<sup>58</sup>

In January we hired Paul Brotzman, a career city manager, and Gil Smith, who had incorporated Carson, served thirteen years on the council there, including two terms as mayor, to take up the slack left by Hussey's departure.<sup>59</sup>

Ultimately they were no more successful than Hussey at changing the county's mindset. However, the garbage crisis did not occur. Economics had made Elsmere a mute issue. The city prepared to buy the canyon from BKK or BFI. City Manager George Carvalho was sure that within twenty years they would be willing sellers.

<sup>1</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 24, 1988; *The Santa Clarita Valley Citizen*, Sept. 28, 1988, and *Daily News*, Sept. 24, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>*The Signal*, Sept. 28, 1988.

<sup>3</sup>*The Signal*, Oct. 16, 1988.

<sup>4</sup>*The Signal*, Oct. 23, 1988.

<sup>5</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 24, 1988, and *The Santa Clarita Valley Citizen*, Nov. 27, 1988.

<sup>6</sup>*The Signal*, Dec. 31, 1988.

<sup>7</sup>*The Signal*, Feb. 2, 1989.

<sup>8</sup>*Daily News*, March 19, 1989, and *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1989.

<sup>9</sup>*The Signal*, July 25, 1989.

<sup>10</sup>*Daily News*, Aug. 25 and Sept. 29, 1989.

<sup>11</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 3, 1989, and *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 3, 1989.

<sup>12</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 5, 1989.

<sup>13</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 16, 1989.

<sup>14</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 19, 1989.

<sup>15</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 22 and 24, 1989, and *Daily News*, Nov. 22, 1989.

<sup>16</sup>*The Signal*, Dec. 6 and 17, 1989, and *Daily News*, Dec. 17, 1989.

<sup>17</sup>*Daily News*, Jan. 5, 1990.

<sup>18</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 6, 1990.

<sup>19</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 7, 1990.

<sup>20</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 11, 1990, and *Daily News*, Jan. 13, 1990.

<sup>21</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 19, 1990, and *Daily News*, Jan. 21, 1990.

<sup>22</sup>*The Signal*, Feb. 1, 1990.

<sup>23</sup>*Daily News*, Feb. 2 and 4, 1990, and *The Signal*, Feb. 4, 1990.

<sup>24</sup>*Daily News*, Feb. 12 and 28, 1990.

<sup>25</sup>*The Signal*, Feb. 14 and 24, 1990, and *Daily News*, Feb. 15, 1990.

<sup>26</sup>*Daily News*, March 26, 1990.

<sup>27</sup>*The Signal*, April 26, 1990.

<sup>28</sup>*The Signal*, June 23 and 26-28, 1990, and *Daily News*, June 24 and 26, 1990.

<sup>29</sup>*The Signal*, February 12 and March 15, 1991.

- <sup>30</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1991.
- <sup>31</sup>*Daily News*, April 1, 1991.
- <sup>32</sup>*Daily News*, April 6, 1991.
- <sup>33</sup>*The Signal*, April 7, 1991.
- <sup>34</sup>*Daily News*, May 7 and 9, 1991, and *The Signal*, May 9, 1991.
- <sup>35</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 2 and 3, 1991.
- <sup>36</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 3, 1992.
- <sup>37</sup>*Daily News*, Jan. 7, 1992.
- <sup>38</sup>*Daily News*, March 5, 1992.
- <sup>39</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1992.
- <sup>40</sup>*Daily News*, May 3, 1992.
- <sup>41</sup>*The Signal*, June 17, 1992.
- <sup>42</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 7, 1992.
- <sup>43</sup>*The Signal*, May 1 and 4, 1993, and *Daily News*, May 7, 1993.
- <sup>44</sup>*The Signal*, May 18, 1993.
- <sup>45</sup>*The Signal*, April 21 and 23, 1994.
- <sup>46</sup>*The Signal*, June 11, 1994.
- <sup>47</sup>*The Signal*, Sept. 15, 1994.
- <sup>48</sup>*Daily News*, Dec. 9, 1994, and Jan. 12, 1995.
- <sup>49</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 15, 1995.
- <sup>50</sup>*The Signal*, May 21, 1995.
- <sup>51</sup>*Daily News*, Sept. 14, 1995; *The Signal*, Sept. 21, 1995, and *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 25, 1995.
- <sup>52</sup>*The Signal*, Nov. 16, 1995.
- <sup>53</sup>*Daily News*, Feb. 28, 1996, and *The Signal*, Feb. 28, 1996.
- <sup>54</sup>*The Signal*, March 7-8, 1996; *Daily News*, March 8, 1996, and *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 1996.
- <sup>55</sup>*The Signal*, March 21, 1996.
- <sup>56</sup>*The Signal*, Oct. 4 and Dec. 12, 1996, and *Daily News*, Oct. 4, 1996.
- <sup>57</sup>*The Signal*, Oct. 13, 18, and 20, 1996, Nov. 13, 1996, and *Daily News*, Nov. 14, 1996.
- <sup>58</sup>*The Signal*, Dec. 12, 1996.
- <sup>59</sup>*The Signal*, Jan. 13, 1997.