'Eureka' Revisited!

By Clair Cunningham, History Committee Chairman

Auburn Lake Trails (ALT) had its material beginnings in 1969 with the purchase of some 12 properties comprising about 3500 acres along Highway 193 between Cool and Greenwood. The first master plan incorporated 4793 acres of which 1255 acres were south of Highway 193. The 125 acres were dropped from the plan in March 1970 because of their non-contiguous location and other developer constraints. The size of the development was further reduced to 2800 acres with 1800 lots when the U.S. government acquired 800 acres to buffer ALT from the anticipated Auburn Lake created by the dam.

The developer of ALT, TRANSLAND CO., was a partnership between LANDTEC of Ohio and Transamerica Development Company (TADCO) who later became the sole developer. As the Project General Manager for TRANSLAND, Tom Reilly was the principal who acquired the land and even named all the roadways in the Trails after California Gold Rush era events and places. Early lot buyers may also remember Mark Smith who later became Assistant Project Manager.

The first set of CC&Rs for Auburn Lake Trails was recorded with El Dorado County on March 19, 1970 and lots went on sale in April. We're not really sure who bought the first lot, but Fred and Donnetta Barnhart bought a lot on April 18, 1970, and that's pretty close.

The Trails formally opened in June of 1970 and the first annual meeting of the newly formed ALT Property Owners Association (POA) was held on April 18, 1971. The annual meetings were subsequently shifted to May to ensure the probability of better weather for such outdoor meetings. Our meager clubhouse facilities were not, and still are not adequate for meetings seating more than about 100 people at a time.

Our first set of CC&Rs characterized ALT as a closed gate community with substantial recreational open space and structures to be managed by a Board of Directors and to be maintained at the expense of lot owners/members. We have since had two major revisions of the CC&Rs and Bylaws. The latest revisions were approved and implemented in March of 1990 after several years of extensive review providing, among other things, for amendments by a simple majority.

Our first decade, the 1970s, was a fun time with much recreational activity - provided by the Developer. A calendar of events was published every month through 1973 with special events every day of the week. Events included were such things as: riding lessons, horseshoes, golf, tennis, fishing, archery, swimming, boating, barbecues, and even log rolling in the Lakeside Clubhouse pond. A recreation director was on hand full time. The Lakeside Clubhouse was a full-time restaurant and a golf Pro shop. The dues were only eight dollars a month for the first three years. TADCO, anxious to sell its lots, obviously helped out with the expenses! In 1974, POA hired a General Manager, Gerry Stewart.

The first issue of Trail Views, our own 'home newsletter,' came out in 1974 edited by Dorothy Price.

Home building was slow at the start, and although the developer had envisioned ALT as a recreational community, an early survey of the membership showed a general desire to make ALT a full family residential community. That changed our direction! From the first set of architectural guidelines that allowed 700 square feet as a home minimum (acceptable for a summer visit!) we went to a minimum requirement of 1200 square feet. It is notable that we now have a mix of homes here, averaging 1800 sq. ft....and some up to 3500 sq. ft.

The 1980s were a bit hectic with some growing pains. Early on it was discovered that the ALT land area could not sustain 1800 septic and effluent systems. A very costly waste water (effluent) sewer system was proposed by TADCO and GDPUD, with lot owners to stand the very considerable expense. The POA Board of Directors filed a lawsuit against TADCO listing some seven specific complaints including the sewer issue.

The lawsuit dragged on for five years and was finally settled with an effective date of March 1985. The settlement provided for a reduction in the number of lots to 1100, all buildable and septicable, and with a monetary settlement of 2.65 million dollars to compensate for the loss of dues sustained by the reduction in the number of Lots. This became our trust fund which the ALT Board of Directors has since wisely invested and uses the interest thereon to help reduce the monthly assessments.

The 1980s saw ALT grow into a more integrated and functional community. The ALT Board of Directors appointed membership committees to ensure more participation and provide lay input in the Trails. Standing committees were appointed for Communications, Covenants, Design, Finance, Fire Awareness, plus Ad Hoc committees as needed. Clubs and service organizations came into being such as the WIFFS (Women in for Friendship and Service), The Silver Spurs Riding and Hiking Club, COTA (Council of the Arts), TGIF, ALT Library, and many Golf Clubs, all contributing to a better life in the Trails. We were more than just a bedroom community.

Other significant events and changes took place during the '80s such as: remodeling of gate one Guardhouse, removal of shaky tower poles from the Lakeside Clubhouse, presentation of the first Foothill Follies (ALT Gala, Oct.'81), renaming of the Equestrian Center to ALTA Gallery (which is no longer in existence). Cluster mailboxes were installed in the Trails. The Library was officially named the ALT Cleary Library in honor of Bill and Edith Cleary who started it.

We're still growing in the '90s with cable TV installed, Gate 3 replaced with double arms, dedication of the Diehl Field as a park, and our own 4th of July parade. We have now become a near-mature community on a possible 1104 building sites/lots. As we near our home structures capacity we will have some 3000 people within our gated community. As we continue to grow towards buildout, it becomes obvious that our facilities are strained and inadequate to meet our needs. Facilities planning committees are constantly looking ahead and drawing up plans and recommendations for the next decade. A pressing need is for a Community Center facility large enough to accommodate our vibrant Trails activities.

Let us sustain our momentum towards a successful maturity - and never overlook the importance of prudently implementing and updating our CC&Rs as we grow. Our first twenty-five years have been full of promise...let's stay with it.