

# Our Community

NEWS

Reporting on community issues in Monument, Palmer Lake, and the surrounding Tri-Lakes area.

September 7, 2001

Volume 1 Number 6

## Interview with Mayor Tenney

by Ray Bedingfield

'Enthusiasm' is one word that captures the personality of Monument Mayor Leon Tenney. In the course of our interview, it was clear he was proud of his twenty-year career as an engineering officer with the Army Corp of Engineers. He spent part of that time at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, where tactics that helped win Desert Storm were developed. His enthusiasm for the Town of Monument and his vision for its future seem to be without limits.

In a round-about way, it was Tenney's young son that got him into local politics. "During a heavy April snow storm, my son was missing. I called the police, but their car got stuck in the snow. When I was trying to help push it out, I turned around and saw my son's head sticking out of the ground!" Later, after Tenney phoned Town Hall about the uncapped drill hole the lad had fallen into, Mr. Sibell, Mayor at the time, came out to take a look. Tenney quickly agreed when

Sibell invited him to serve on the Monument Planning Commission. While on that group, Tenney formed some opinions. "It is wrong to rely on tap fees to operate the water system. Tap fees should be reserved for improvements to the system so bonds do not have to be issued. I was very unhappy with the water system, and so were a lot of other people. It was bad at the time. The water was clouded, muddy looking."

After quitting his Colorado Springs job in '97, Leon became vice president of a small local software company. In '98, he ran for Monument trustee on a platform of clean water and clean policies. "The first thing we did was to deliver on the water. We changed the usage fees so commercial customers started paying the same rate as residential users. We improved the system substantially, cleaning up the dirty water. The quality is better and now everyone pays their fair share."

Mayor Tenney is critical of the *Tri-Lakes Tribune*,

the area's local paper. "They have editorialized on the front page, diminishing their credibility," he says, referring to opinion pieces running as news articles. "When we took office, we wanted to work with everyone, including John Dominowski and Ernie Biggs. In fact, John worked with the Town to rework the arch built earlier by volunteers. I thought we had a good team effort going into the job. But then, during that project, about last October, they started attacking and it hasn't let up since. The coverage in the *Tribune* made it look like the paper was owned by Biggs and Dominowski. The attack was relentless. Frankly, I thought everything was so exaggerated and so erroneous that nobody could possibly believe it, but some did."

*"Developments coming up for approval this year are more than the last two years combined. There will be more than that next year."*  
- Mayor Leon Tenney

Do you think the firing of Al Sharon was the cause of the recall election? "Al Sharon had fallen in with Sibell, Biggs, and Dominowski. They used his firing as a focal point for everything they wanted to accomplish. They got the *Tribune* in on it, reporting only their side and nothing else. Sharon simply wasn't doing his job. The new Police Chief, Joe Kissell, put a policies

and procedures manual in place in less than one month. Sharon couldn't, or wouldn't, accomplish that in almost three years. There were other problems, such as no traffic law enforcement on Highway 105. Mr. Sharon didn't move to correct them. He wasn't following the ordinances of the Town and he wasn't cooperating with the Board. For instance, he agitated Town employees by insisting that all salary hearings be held in public, something totally unnecessary, and this was just after an across-the-board 25% pay increase was approved."

"The thing that really gets to me is how much more we could have done without this recall election. There's all the old stuff that hadn't been done, such as dam repair on Monument Lake. The old approach to something like that was ignore the problem and maybe it'll go away. This one will not go away. We will start repairs on the first of November. We should also take this opportunity

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## Interview with Mayor Tenney

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to improve public facilities around the Lake. We want the people of Monument to enjoy it. It's a public lake, accessible from a road off the end of Mitchell Avenue, not something owned by one man, as many people seem to believe."

What are some other things you're working on? "The extension of 2nd Street to the 105 bridge is just ahead. We bought the right of way for road improvements from the owner, paying about \$450,000, or \$4.00 per square foot, a very fair price. Groundbreaking for the 2nd Street and Beacon Lite extensions was held August 28. Changing the road patterns will make traffic flow much better and we think it will revitalize downtown Monument. The next step will be to partner with the County and the State on a series of roads in and out of Town. All these things have a lot to do with quality of life around here. For instance, we can work with these other governing bodies to improve pedestrian and bike trails throughout the area, on Highway 105, and on other roads through Town. Maybe we won't have to always jump in our cars to get where we're going."

"One of the things I like about this current Board is that we listen to all points of view. And then we make the hard decisions. We strive to make the right decisions for this Town and for everybody in it. We also keep in mind the impact our decisions will have on our neighbors, including Mr. Biggs and Mr. Dominowski."

If the recall effort fails? "These attacks have come at great cost to the Board members and their families. If recall is defeated, this Board will be given back its morale. Then we can move forward, work with the new Police Chief, and continue improving Town finances."

What's up ahead? "Developments coming up for approval this year are more than the last two years combined. There will be more than that next year. We need to get some grants of lottery money from the State to buy open space as was done with Greenland Ranch nearby in Douglas County. I think most of the people are working with us. The only people who aren't are the little crowd that had a chance, but didn't do anything, and now wants to take over again. I'm enthusiastic about Monument because I live here, and I love this Town."

After all the discussions regarding politics, we wound up talking about the U.S. Army back when. I left the interview thinking that this is a good man, someone who cares, who can get things done. Leon Tenney remains enthusiastic.

## Open Letter To Monument

*by Claudette Bedingfield*

Let me introduce myself by telling you a bit of my history. My family moved to the Tri-Lakes area from sunny California in the early '80's, arriving during one of the worst blizzards of the century. Ours was the last car to make it over Monument Hill before they closed the gate. So, we slid into town in our little Mustang convertible with a killer grip on the steering wheel, tears of enthusiasm and fear running down our cheeks. Welcome to Colorado. In those days, Monument was a sleepy little town with a turn-of-the-century barn still standing that said "Take Hood's Sarsaparilla" on the roof. There was no McDonald's, no Taco Bell, no Safeway, no King Soopers. Near where Brookhart's is now, there was a truckstop that served a pretty stiff piece of lemon meringue pie. I'm sure many of you will also nostalgically recall those days. Although our home is in Woodmoor, we thought we lived in Monument, since that's where we got our mail. My mother came for a visit the first spring we were here, and she worried that we were too far out in the country, no close neighbors, just rolling hills of wildflowers to wander in.

Well, things have changed. You could say sleepy little Monument has awakened with a start! Suddenly, it is hard to tell if we are still in beautiful Colorado or have entered some bizarre time warp that has thrown us back into crowded, traffic-jammed, smog-filled California. It feels like déjà vu all over again. I'm seeing developments that look strangely like the ones I left behind, nice houses so wedged together that on a breezy summer evening you dare not open your windows for fear of overhearing some personal intimacy from your oh-so-close neighbors. Now, instead of a greasy burger at the truckstop, we are enjoying franchise food galore. I'm seeing houses creeping up the side of the mountains, encroaching on what was once a tranquil view and wildlife habitat. I'm yearning for the days of L&L Market yet I'm faced with the possibility of a Wal-Mart. The traffic is approaching L.A. congestion. And I'm wondering why Monument residents are being asked to recall a Town Board that has favored managed growth, traffic improvements, and beautification of the Town. I think I've been here long enough now to know that you, my good Monument neighbors, are proud of your community, and you want to see it grow in a healthy way. You believe it can grow while sustaining the beautiful, relaxed, friendly home town atmosphere we love. Could I be wrong? I think not.

I do think something happened while we weren't

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paying attention. The Town sprouted at such a rapid pace that it has outgrown the old ways of doing business enjoyed by previous Town officials. The old I'll-do-you-a-favor-if-you-do-me-a-favor doesn't work anymore. The Town has simply gotten too big and too complex to accommodate that kind of backroom governing. Unfortunately, the Town is faced with the Herculean task of cleaning up and growing at the same time.

The position the Board finds itself in is daunting in many ways. What they do now will affect Monument for decades and will shape the greater Tri-Lakes area. The kinds of decisions they make now are crucial to the development of our shared community. They are in a position of power like never before in the history of the Town. Our heretofore-sleepy little Town has become a target for big developers who have no interest in Monument other than to increase their bank balances. The Board must rise to the challenge and maintain control of their Town, your Town, and our community.

Not only is the Board facing important decisions, but so are you, my Monument friends. I'm sure you've heard it said that true democracy is found at the grass roots level. Well, here you are with an opportunity to direct your future and mine with your vote. Your most basic American right and privilege is now about as important as it ever can be. Remember that just a couple of years ago, the Palmer Lake race for mayor was tied, and they had to draw the winner's name from a hat! Wow, imagine how the person who didn't get out to vote but who was in favor of the "other guy" must have felt about that! Guess we'll never know. I do know that what you do in the upcoming recall election will impact your future and mine.

Remember why you elected these six hardworking, dedicated people a year ago last April, and give them your support again. Don't listen to lies and rumors about these good people who have given so much to your Town and theirs. They are there for only one reason: They love this place as much as you do and as much as I do. Help them continue to work for you by voting NO on recall on election day, Tuesday, September 11th.

**Our web site is up.  
Read all the back issues. Send us feedback.  
[www.OurCommunityNews.org](http://www.OurCommunityNews.org)**

## Demands Delay Dam Repairs

by Roth Hyland

Demands by private property owners are delaying needed repairs to the Monument lake dam. "This project involves repairing and expanding the spillway and dam, dredging the bottom to create a deeper pool for fish, and improving flood control and road access for the public," says Monument Mayor Leon Tenney. "The Town envisions public use of Monument Lake for fishing, swimming, non-motorized boating, and hiking trails around the shore."

The Monument Lake Project involves at least three owners. The Town owns the lake bottom plus 50 feet back from the shoreline. El Paso County owns the dam and spillway. The State of Colorado owns the water rights. Ernest Biggs and his family own much of the land surrounding the lake.

Construction of Monument Lake resulted from an 1893 act of the State Legislature. In 1937, the County got the dam and the Town got the lake bottom. The State kept the rights to the water. In 1979, the spillway was constructed. During the 1980's, the lake was rented to the Western Sportsman Association. In the 1990's, the State Department of Wildlife leased the lake in exchange for stocking it. They participated

in building the current road access to the shore from Mitchell Avenue.

In 1995, the State Dam Inspector recommended repairs be made to the dam. The previous administration did not address the problem until the summer of 1999, when then Trustee Tenney persuaded the Board to form the Lake Committee and recommended that it be chaired by Betty Konarski. Mr. Biggs was invited to join the Committee but said he was not interested and did not care whether there was a lake or not, a surprising statement given that his campground business benefits from being near the lake. In 1999, the Lake Committee, with the Town's support, got an act passed by the State Legislature that will give the dam, lake, and water rights to the Town once the dam has been repaired.

The County and Town entered into an agreement to share the costs to repair the dam, while the Town will bear the cost of dredging. The current repair estimate is near \$2.3 million, with another \$500,000 for dredging. The \$250,000 engineering management contract will be shared by the Town and the County.

Construction was planned for two phases, with the

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- Mayor Leon Tenney

## Demands Delay Dam Repairs

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first phase originally scheduled to begin in February 2001. The construction was to be suspended to accommodate Biggs' campground summer season and then resume in late September for fall completion. In the fall of 2000, Mr. Biggs participated in discussions aimed at keeping everyone informed about the project and highlighting the need for access to the dam by crossing Mr. Biggs' land. Three days before the January 2001 scheduled bid opening, Mr. Biggs demanded concessions and up to \$5,000 per day for any construction during the camping season from May 15 through October 1. He also demanded exceptions and exemptions from the zoning laws for his buildings and property, an exclusive license for paddleboats and rowboats on the lake, and a license to build a dock. "These last minute demands required the Town, County, and State to delay the start of the project until the accesses and easements could be obtained through eminent domain," says Tenney.

"The Town is now negotiating with the property owners, the County, and the State to acquire better public access and access for construction. Part of these negotiations with Mr. Biggs include resolving violations of agreements with the Town dating from his annexation to the Town in the early 1990's and including his approved 1994 Master Plan. The violations of the Master Plan are in several major areas including storage of RVs in an unacceptable location, construction of cabins in the wrong location, and missing landscape screening. When the Town cited Mr. Biggs in April 2001, they gave him the option of submitting a change to his Master Plan, which he has done. The Town is now considering these changes in the normal course of planning," says Tenney.

"The Town is very pro-business and has attempted to deal in a fair manner with everyone. However, the dam should not be repaired for only one individual owner to have exclusive rights to the lake. Rather, the public should benefit most from the project, since they are footing the bill. The Town, the public, and the Tri-Lakes region benefit from this lake improvement project, but the business that stands most to gain by the lake improvement is Mr. Biggs's campground."

Mr. Biggs, who lives outside the Town, has been an outspoken supporter of the recall election. "Most likely, Mr. Biggs is attempting to delay the project and have the recall election so parties more favorable to him might gain control and he can then realize more financial compensation in Town deals," says Mayor Tenney.

## Editor's Note

*Our Community News* is publishing the following interview in the interest of fairness. However, we believe that this election does not pit one candidate against another. That is the purpose of regular elections such as the one to be held next April. The purpose of this recall election is to determine whether or not the current Board members merit removal from office. Only if the electorate votes for recall of the Mayor does Ms. Konarski's candidacy become relevant. As we have made clear in these pages, we do not believe that any of the Board members merit removal from office at this special recall election.

## Interview with Betty Konarski

by Tommie Plank

The September 11th recall election offers Betty Konarski her third opportunity to try for a seat on the Monument Board of Trustees. She applied for a vacancy a few years ago but "Dutch" VanKekerix was appointed instead. In the election of April of 2000, she came in fifth for the four available seats. Despite those disappointments, her desire to be involved in Town government remains undiminished. She served for two years on the Monument Planning Commission, was Chairperson of the Monument Lake Preservation Committee, and has served on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for the past year. She now has her eye on the top spot, having turned in her petition for the Mayor's position.

Asked why she feels drawn to run for Mayor, Konarski replied, "I am afraid. I fear for the direction the Town is going. I fear both extreme sides in these emotional debates. And I want to be of service to the Town."

She readily admits having signed recall petitions for the five trustees and the Mayor, saying she wanted to send a wake-up message to Town officials, telling them "Be careful! Watch what you are doing!" She also stated that she feels there is currently an "atmosphere of fear and mistrust among the staff and professional employees of the Town." However, she claims she does not support a complete recall, and says she would be "proud to serve with any or all of the sitting trustees; they are not bad people." She has publicly stated her support for Trustee Ed Delaney, but declined to name any other Trustees she backs.

The December 2nd, 1999, edition of the *Tri-Lakes Tribune* reported that Betty believed at that time that "...a cement plant is a good thing for Monument. Not only will it help support the development of light industry that she favors, but it will set a high standard for companies coming here in the future." When asked about

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her vote in favor of the concrete batch plant during her tenure on the Planning Commission, Betty says, "The role of the Planning Commission is to look at policy, to measure each application against that policy, and to rule; zoning was key."

She believes the Comprehensive Plan is the way for citizens to have input on needed zoning changes, and was quoted in the same issue of the *Tribune* as saying "The people against the cement plant should have been screaming for the last 10 years to update the comprehensive plan if they really wanted to affect change." She was asked for her thoughts on property rights and the impact of new development on existing neighboring properties, but declined to give an opinion.

Asked what she thought about a Wal-Mart on Baptist Road, she stated, "[Opinions of] all sides should be taken in as information," and believes that "both sides of Baptist Road should, and eventually will, develop into retail space." She does not believe the Historic Monument retail district or the Highway 105 businesses need protection from this potential threat. Instead, she prefers that other measures be used to attract new businesses, including hiring a professional architect to consult on ways to enhance the historic district.

She does, however, believe in "smart growth" for the Tri-Lakes area. She feels the Town could do a better job of "working with people, not demanding compliance," and that design guidelines need to be implemented.

Her service on the Planning Commission recently ended when the Board of Trustees voted on reappointments. Several applications were received, requiring two rounds of voting that resulted in Konarski and another applicant being tied for one position. She then requested her name be removed from consideration. Nevertheless, she believes she was not reappointed to the Planning Commission because of hard feelings towards her from some members of the Board.

She reacted with surprise when asked about her perceived alliance with some disgruntled landowners and ousted members of the previous Board. In the April 2000 election, Konarski's name appeared on a political banner along with the names of former Mayor Sibell and former Board members Bailey and VanKekerix who were seeking re-election. None of the four were elected. She says she is "not in anybody's camp. What you see is what you get with me. I will pay my own campaign fees and make my own decisions, inviting lively debate and different

points of view."

"I am very disturbed that Town politics and positioning is preventing work on Monument Lake and dam from going forward," Konarski stated. She finds fault with everyone involved in this stage of the process, campground owner Ernie Biggs, as well as Town officials. She claims that quibbling over easements and both sides taking uncompromising positions have held up the writing of necessary criteria for the State Dam Inspector, which was needed for the project to start on time. "This is a leadership issue," she claims.

Does she believe the current Board of Trustees has accomplished anything positive in the past year? She credits them for their "focus on transportation issues and moving forward on transportation links." But she believes they often are "too short-sighted, using a band aid approach" rather than looking for long-term solutions. She also credits them for being proactive in searching for

grants and other monies available for town and community projects.

As for what she feels she has to offer as a Town leader, Betty cites her years of leadership training, her confidence in her ability to build trust, and her communication skills. "What we do now will affect the community for the next fifty years. If we don't get together, we can't create the powerful community Monument can be-

come."

*"What we do now will affect the community for the next fifty years. If we don't get together, we can't create the powerful community Monument can become."*

- Betty Konarski

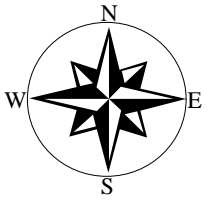
## Six Good People

*editorial opinion by Ray Bedingfield*

Have you ever heard of six good people dedicated to the service of a community, six good people with vastly different personalities, six good people who carefully heard, studied, argued and voted their conscience on hundreds of individual issues, all being subjected to the same recall election?

I've been in the Tri-Lakes area for almost seventeen years and like most of us, I've seen the good, the bad, and the ugly in local politics. This recall election, brought to us by people who were voted off the Board in the April 2000 election, and backed by two or three of their major landowner friends, is by far the ugliest. But what really grates on me is that these Board members are six honest people who get the job done and consistently work in the best interests of the people of Monument.

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## Our Community News

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**Tue., Sept. 11th  
Please go to the polls  
and Vote NO on Recall.**

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**Look for our next issue Friday, October 5th**

September 7, 2001

*Our Community News*

## Six Good People - Editorial

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These six good people were elected by the people of Monument and they have represented the Town well. To say they care about the Town and its people is a terrific understatement. Their families live here, their churches are here, the schools their children attend are here.

Steve Wilcox, who has been attacked with wild exaggeration and hyperbole, has been a Boy Scout leader and an officer of his church.

Leon Tenney got into local politics not because he had any possibility of gaining fame or fortune, but because his son fell into a uncapped drill hole.

Glenda Smith is a homemaker who cares so much about the Town that she has made service to Monument the most important thing in her life, with the possible exception of a couple grandkids and her husband Don.

Kristi Schutz is today's "soccer mom" who succeeds in juggling family and community service and maintaining a balanced attitude toward everyone, even those who are attacking her.

Skip Morgan not only lives in Monument, but also

owns a successful business in Town.

Ed DeLaney, a man who came to the Tri-Lakes area when the Viet Nam war was still raging, has a strong sense of obligation to his community. He's served on the Board longer than anyone in memory.

These six people are volunteers who work tirelessly on behalf of the Town and its people, who generally do not want uncontrolled growth, concrete plants, and a hundred acres of "big box" stores. Together these six people are improving the water systems and the roads, the way developments get approved or not, the finances, the police department, and the level of dedication of the people who work for Monument. In the process of doing all of this, they now have on deposit more than half a million dollars, more money than has ever been in the Town coffers.

This recall is wrong. Do the right thing: On Tuesday, September 11th, **Vote NO on recall.**

*If you have questions or comments regarding this newsletter, please contact us at [our\\_community\\_news@hotmail.com](mailto:our_community_news@hotmail.com) or our new address: P.O. Box 1742, Monument, Colorado 80132. © Copyright 2001, Our Community News*