

Our Community

NEWS

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

End of July 2001

Volume 1 Number 3

Interview with Skip Morgan

by Ray Bedingfield

"Extremists tend to think that the end justifies the means. The local ideological issue has to do with absolute property rights. The local property rights extremists feel that regardless of what is done with a piece of property, there should be no thought as to how it affects the neighbors because only the rights of the owner should be considered. These extremists do pretty much anything: slander, lie – nothing else matters to them – in the support of their cause." So says Lowell "Skip" Morgan, a Monument Board Trustee who speaks what is on his mind. On his mind these days is the upcoming recall election designed and engineered by a few people who own property in, but live outside of, the Town of Monument.

Who is Skip Morgan? "Well, my background is in applied physics, but in recent years I have ventured into the scientific software business. I first wrote a computer program in 1972, then in the mid-'70's began doing a lot of consulting. My education includes a Ph.D. in physics, as well as training in engineering. I lived in Boulder back in the '70's, but have lived in this area of Colorado since 1988. I live in Monument and run a scientific software and applied physics research business in Monument."

Morgan is a big man, impressive with his gray beard. He is an habitual bike rider, his way of staying in shape. He considers his words carefully and answers questions in a quiet, thoughtful tone, even when the words reflect his much deeper feelings.

"How did you become a member of the Board," I asked. "Kind of by accident," he replied. "A year ago last November, I went to a Transit Mix meeting, and that's where it all started. Later, a number of people met at my house to talk about it. We found that a very large number of people were against the proposed concrete batch plants in Monument. That was the beginning of my interest in local government. The following April I ran

for office and was elected."

Reflecting on the time since his election, he continued: "What we do affects the entire area in so many ways. In addition to doing a tough job, we must work together in a civilized manner. If you've ever attended a Board of Trustees meeting, you know what I mean, because there can be some real disagreement. But the Board consists of good, intelligent, thoughtful people willing to make what are sometimes difficult or unpopular decisions in order to ensure a good future for Monument. It unifies the Board that we all share a similar vision of what we want this area to look like. What we don't want it to look like is North Academy or Briargate. We are well aware that we cannot stop growth, but we must guide it. The Board members volunteer our services

to Monument. We have no vested interests and try to do a fair and honest job."

The people behind the recall put out a newsletter called *The Eye on Monument*. I asked Skip Morgan to tell me what he thinks of *The Eye on Monument*? "It is illegitimate, slanderous, and comes from an extremist perspective. I understand that

Ernie Biggs underwrites it and also paid the legal fees for the Recall Committee."

What about *The Tri-Lakes Tribune*? "It would be nice to see balanced coverage by the local newspaper. I'm not asking for favorable coverage, just fair coverage. Steve Prudhomme, *The Tribune's* editor, never comes across to talk with us. He's always talking to the other side, but not to us. His predecessor would have gone out of his way to get the detailed story from both sides. I even tried to put a paid advertisement in *The Tribune* but they wouldn't print it. The opposition can criticize and impugn, but we are not able to say anything back, even if we are paying for it!"

"I don't think enough information to counter the misinformation in *The Eye on Monument* and *The Tribune* is coming out. The people who want us out, our opposition, are extremists on the issue of property rights.

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They have no justification for this recall. The outcome of the recall will depend on how much research the voters are willing to do on these matters and how much interest they have in the future of this area."

Monument Police Audit

by George Barnes

At a special meeting July 13, the Town of Monument received the results of an independent assessment of the Town's Police Department. The evaluators examined 14 different action categories and made recommendations based on the collected data and professional experiences of all the participants.

Independent consulting firms Integrated Network Incorporated (INI) of Colorado Springs and AJ Resources of Wheatridge were responsible for conducting the assessment. Their conclusions were based on interviews and examinations that took place in late May and early June 2001. Confidential interviews were conducted with all members of the Police Department. According to Town Manager Rick Sonnenburg, the cost of the assessment is approximately \$15,000, but this amount could increase if further studies are warranted. Recently, *The Tri-Lakes Tribune* newspaper has noted that the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) provides less expensive departmental evaluations for municipalities. The use of the CACP in this instance, however, was deemed inappropriate, given the active involvement in CACP of former Police Chief Al Sharon.

The assessment noted that the Police Department possesses, "...some highly skilled and highly dedicated employees." Nonetheless, several factors were shown which weaken the effectiveness of these employees.

The department lacks a single, up-to-date "Policy and Procedure" (P&P) manual. The town's police force currently operates with two different P&P manuals, one complete and the other containing only three revised sections. This creates confusion as to which policies to follow. According to the assessment, no other instruction is, "...more important for a police department to maintain and constantly update...it is the guiding document upon which employees should base their decisions." The previous Chief of Police, Al Sharon, reportedly viewed a new P&P manual as a high priority, but he never completed the update. The few revised sections were apparently based on the CACP guidelines for writing P&P manuals. The assessment recommended that the

next police chief develop a new P&P manual.

The assessment also focused on the legal status of the portion of State Highway 105 that runs through Monument. Former Chief Sharon's policy was to not enforce traffic laws on this stretch of 105 because he considered it outside Monument's jurisdiction. Any motorist speeding through that portion of Town was not detained or cited by local police. The assessment noted that Colorado statutes do not preclude the Town from enforcing state laws on adjacent roadways and that it makes sense when the safety and welfare of local citizens are at risk. As further emphasized by Mayor Tenney, the first obligation of the Town is to make sure laws are enforced, regardless of the exact jurisdiction.

Additional categories examined in the assessment involved long-term personnel and administrative problems. A press release distributed by the Town observed that, "Serious deficiencies in record keeping and hiring practices were uncovered..." Despite these problems, the assessment concluded that the Police Department was in, "...an excellent position to prepare for growth."

Recommendations for action were given for all the categories that were studied. At the conclusion of the presentation, the Mayor and Board of Trustees voted unanimously to direct the Town Manager and next Police Chief to implement the recommendations. Town Manager Rick Sonnenburg stated that the impartial evaluation of the Police Department was a necessary and important step so that the new Chief would have a clear baseline from which to operate.

New Police Chief Sworn In

by Andrew Keating

Editor of the new E-Magazine, PalmerDivide.com

The Monument trustees swore in Joseph Kissell as the new Monument Chief of Police Monday, July 16. Kissell, a 25-year veteran of the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, replaces former Chief Al Sharon.

Kissell takes over the Monument Police Department in the wake of the uproar created by the firing of Chief Sharon. Sharon was terminated by the board of trustees on April 16. He is now the Chief of Police in Ft. Lupton, Colorado.

He also comes in on the heels of a newly completed audit of the Monument Police Department. The audit pointed out certain deficiencies, as well as points of

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strength, within the department.

Trustee Kristi Schutz said that the audit would give Kissell “a good baseline” with which to start his tenure, adding that it was time for a new Chief of Police. “It will be great to have him on board,” Schutz said. “It’s tough for a department to be without it’s department head.”

Trustee Lowell Morgan echoed Schutz’s sentiment. “The police audit gives the new chief a good place to start in getting the department in order,” Morgan said. “Our point was neither to bury nor praise the Ft. Lupton Police Chief, but rather to get our new chief off to a good start.”

Kissell was approved by the Board after a search process was conducted by Town Manager Rick Sonnenburg. Kissell was chosen from three finalists. Due to privacy concerns, the names of the other finalists were not released.

“(Sonnenburg) gave us the top few, we went over them, and Ollie Gray (the owner of Integrated Network, Inc., the company that oversaw the police audit) helped,” said Schutz. “Rick thought he was wonderful. Ollie thought he was (the best candidate) also.”

Kissell has served in many different capacities within the El Paso County Sheriffs Office. He spent 12 years as a deputy, 12 as Commander of the Administration, Patrol and Investigation Divisions, as well as the Metro Detention Facility, and served as Bureau Chief of the Support Services and Detention Bureaus.

Kissell has a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology-Criminology from the University of Southern Colorado, Colorado Springs, and an Associates degree in Criminal Justice from Pikes Peak Community College. He is a graduate of the FBI Academy, the Penn State Police Executive Development Program, Colorado’s Senior Commanders Program, and also holds various other certificates of training.

Speaking Out

by Faye Elbaum, outgoing Publisher

The day after being appointed as a Trustee for the Town of Monument, I was interviewed by Andrew Keating. [Andrew’s article is at <http://www.palmerdivide.com/ElbaumAppointed.html>.]

One of his questions was why I decided to submit my name for Trustee. I told him that as a concerned citizen of the Town, I had been considering it for some time, but chose to wait and see if anyone else put their name forward for consideration. The position was advertised for many weeks and, since no one else applied, I decided

to apply. I would have gladly bowed out to anyone else if they had applied.

I have no hidden agenda and certainly no need or desire for any kind of power. My only agenda is that I’m concerned about what happens in the Town. To avoid the appearance of a conflict, I am resigning from the Public Works Committee and as Publisher of this newsletter.

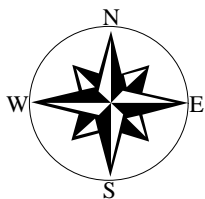
Mr. Keating asked if the recall or negative publicity being printed about the current Board members had anything to do with me waiting so long to decide to commit myself. I had to answer honestly that it did. Since I too have now become a target of the personal attacks that are so prevalent, I would like to address the many falsehoods that have been circulated about me.

I was not appointed by the current Board to be a member of the Home Rule Charter Commission. I was elected to that position at the same time the current Town Board was elected. Prior to running for the Home Rule Charter Commission, I had no particular interest in playing a role in Town government, but was interested in what was happening in the Town. It finally sank in that if I was concerned, it was time to do something about it. I realized there were not enough people on the advisory committees, so I volunteered to be a member of the Public Works Committee. I have also participated in the effort to update Monument’s Comprehensive Plan. If the people who are so busy criticizing the Board and the way the Town is run would volunteer on some of these committees, maybe things wouldn’t be so rancorous. Anyone who volunteers and has a sincere interest is accepted and there are still numerous vacancies.

As for being under anyone’s “spell” as has been alleged, I am fully in command of my own thoughts and ideas. If being a concerned citizen and volunteering makes me a target, then so be it.

I have been accused of being a “liberal democrat.” People who know me would be shocked to hear this. I am probably as independent as they come and hope to use this for good on the Board of Trustees. I have never been a “yes” person and have no plans to start now. Honesty means a great deal to me.

I thank the many people who expressed their appreciation for my efforts in putting out this newsletter and apologize for leaving it so soon. Anyone reading it can see it is not an imitation of anything else circulating in the Town. It has been nice to hear good comments about a newsletter that is trying to be positive and to present facts and viewpoints not available elsewhere. There are many good things happening in this Town and I hope to contribute to them.



Our Community News

P.O. Box 273
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**Reporting on
Tri-Lakes Area Issues**

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inside...

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End of July 2001

Our Community News

July 4th Parade a Great Success

Courtesy the Monument Hill Sertoma Club

By all accounts, everyone attending the Parade had a good time celebrating our Country's 225th Independence Day. It was also another anniversary, as this was the 40th annual 4th of July Parade held in Monument.

There were 133 units participating in the Parade this year. The 338th U.S. Army Reserve Band traveled from Columbus, Ohio, to be a part of the festivities. The Sertoma Spirit float came from Denver and the Historic Union Avenue Circus Train was up from Pueblo. The Tri-Lakes Women's Club float was featured on the front page of the Gazette Thursday after winning the Best Kazoo Band award. Grand Prize went to the Colorado Springs Corvette Club and the President's award went to Union Avenue Circus Train. Maria Goday won Best Overall Presentation and Ben and Sam Collins won the Most Original award for their red, white and blue llama.

Parade attendance was an estimated 15,000 spectators. Two sound stages were employed to bring more Parade information to a larger number of people. The event was broadcast live by KSPZ radio and was televised by Channel 12. Over 60 members of the Monument Hill Sertoma Club worked to make the Parade a memorable celebration of freedom for the people of the Tri-Lakes region.

Calendar

- **Palmer Lake Town Council Workshop**, Thu., Aug. 2, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent.
- **N. El Paso County Coalition of Community Assoc.**, Sat., Aug. 4, 9:30 am, Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr.
- **Monument Board of Trustees**, Mon., Aug. 6, 6:30 pm, Monument Town Hall, 166 2nd St.
- **Monument Planning Commission**, Wed., Aug. 8, 6:30 pm, Monument Town Hall, 166 2nd St.
- **Palmer Lake Planning Commission Workshop**, Wed., Aug. 8, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent. Transit Mix concrete batch plant proposal.
- **Palmer Lake Planning Commission Hearing**, Wed., Aug. 15, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent. Transit Mix concrete batch plant proposal.
- **Monument Board of Trustees**, Mon., Aug. 20, 6:30 pm, Monument Town Hall, 166 2nd St.
- **Triview Metropolitan District Board Meeting**, Thu., Aug. 23, 8:30 am, District. Office, 174 N. Washington.
- **Friends of Ben Lomond Mountain**, Thu., Aug. 23, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent.

If you have questions or comments regarding this newsletter, please contact us at our_community_news@hotmail.com or P.O. Box 273, USAF Academy, Colorado 80840. © Copyright 2001, Our Community News