

the reactor

By Paul Azevedo

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A couple of Sundays ago I took another walk with my kids, this time to inspect the famous sportsmen's club scar up close.

You can still see the scar of road spoil from most of Linda Mar and Park Pacifica. You may remember the famous fiasco, when the club just started up the hill with a bulldozer and cut a road in to their property on the mountain, then bulldozed a rifle range, all without by-your-leaves, permits, or permissions.

Rules and laws are onerous, but without them we have examples like this one, of "to hell with everybody else. We're gonna do it our way."

IF THERE was none of this philosophy around, we wouldn't need Coastal Commissions, planning commissions, zoning laws, FCCs, FTCs, EPAs, and on and on.

We started at the Pitto ranch, where some vandals had hurt helpless animals that morning, and started up the hill. Mike and Marty went on ahead, Joan and I brought up the rear. We followed a deer trail through the underbrush, and finally broke out onto a horse trail. Eventually we found what's left of the sportsmen's road after erosion and landslides had done their work.

The scars are still there.

SOME OF the gullies came up to Joan's waist, some were even deeper. The soil, which was bulldozed down to sterile shale, after nine and a half years is still resisting regrowth. A few tentative strands of poison oak and blackberry are trying, without much success, to reclaim their own.

We reached the spot that is such an eyesore throughout much of Linda Mar and Park Pacifica.

IT REALLY didn't look too bad up close. True, the gullies are deep and ugly. But I was comparing it to the desolation behind it, where the dozer tried to make a rifle range.

It looks like a practice area for Vietnamese defoliation. It looks like it had been scraped, then sterilized. In fact, it looks like several acres of moon-scape.

THE REST of the mountain has its scrub oak, manzanita, poison oak and blackberry. Here, nothing. These acres of moon landscape are, in a few years, going to be a real Dakota-style badlands. Who knows how deep the gullies will be! After only nine years, they are difficult to jump across in places.

The desolation is depressing. The Coastside Sportsmen's Club, which so blithely sailed into this project, has left it. Its funds, according to the Tribune files, were dissipated trying to repair the road. Promises were made that the land would be planted. I see little sign of it, though I don't know how bad it would have been if they hadn't done something.

It's a great example of carelessness, sloppiness, of doing damage beyond the power of those involved to restore. At least it is beyond their apparent willingness, since it is still so bad after almost ten years.

Gullies. Scars. Sterile shale ... desert. A fine place to show our children what parts of Death Valley look like.

The damage that was done by a casual bulldozer operator for a couple of hundred dollars cannot be repaired without massive labor and dollars by the tens of thousands.

Our environment is a fragile thing.