



Paul Azevedo

## The Reactor

### Reflecting on Anniversaries

After almost seven years, the painful effects of Prop. 13 are still being felt. Prop. 13 was a meat ax, and cities, counties and districts are still adapting to its stringencies and attempting to perform their functions under its restrictions.

As a concerned citizen and a user of local government services, I worry about the effects of Prop. 13. As a tax-paying homeowner, on the other hand, I am grateful that Prop. 13 may have saved my home from the unfair burdens of the over-utilized property tax. In 1978 property taxes were too high, but even more important, they were not tied to income, nor even to purchase value. No one knew to what values properties would escalate, so no one could predict how high property taxes would go. No one could plan rationally. It is fair to tax the farmer for each gallon of milk the cow produces, but is unfair to tax the carcass value until the time comes to slaughter the cow. Jarvis and Gann put into their proposition that the assessed value of a home should be frozen at purchase and reassessed only when the home was sold.

This has led to complaints from some people who point out that their neighbor pays half as much in taxes for the same value home, just because he has lived there longer.

However, if you buy your home in 1985, you can ascertain just what your property taxes will be in 1990. You can plan and budget and buy a home that fits within your budget. Prop. 13 took some of the uncertainties, and the worries resulting from those uncertainties, out of the equation.

March 19, 1985 was the 10th anniversary of this corner. I re-read some of my early columns the other day, and found one I'd forgotten. In it I asked the question: Are you unfairly assessed? I said that taxing the increase in value of a home through the property tax assessment was an unfair burden. I suggested a freeze, locking in assessed valuations at purchase time for as long as the same owner kept his home.

In 1975 that was a pretty wild idea. I never thought it would become law, yet it was voted in just three years later, in June 1978. I'll never know, but I'll always wonder: did I plant the idea in someone's head, who talked it up to someone else...who...

But perhaps I'd best keep quiet. I have enough sins on my conscience already without taking on the blame for Prop. 13.

But it does make me wonder. In those 10 years, those 500 columns more or less, did I let loose an idea or two that changed people's lives? In this business you can never know.

I've enjoyed putting together these columns. I've made a few people mad, but perhaps they clarified their own ideas in the course of disagreeing with mine, and that's OK too.

Today is another anniversary. I went to work for the Tribune, April 10, 1966. Since then, both living and working in Pacifica, I've gotten very much involved in the city. It's been an interesting experience, to say the least.