

The Reactor

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A Legacy From the Past

I don't intend to express an opinion on the Habitat CoHousing controversy, for the good reason that I haven't paid much attention to it. However, I do know a good deal about Honora Sharp, enough to point out that it was not the Sharp family, as mentioned in last week's Tribune, which gave the golf course property to San Francisco.

It's a bit involved. Bear with me. Honora Sharp inherited the land that became the golf course from her husband George in 1882. As a married woman and widow, she lived her life in San Francisco hotels, the better ones. She died in 1905, childless, leaving two-thirds of her estate to Adolph Spreckels and Reuben Lloyd, both millionaires, both San Francisco Park Commissioners. She and they hoped they could create a memorial gate at the entrance to Golden Gate Park, to honor George. That turned out to be impossible.

Legal hassles, earthquake and fire left a 410 (remember that number)

acre ranch on the San Mateo coast and \$80,000 in cash. A banker, Samuel Murphey (with an "e") succeeded Reuben Lloyd as heir. He signed over his half in the summer of 1917 to the City and County of San Francisco. It was his wording, not Honora Sharp's, that contains the famous limitation. Sharp Park may be used for "park and recreation purposes only."

On the face of it, if a portion of Lakeside Ave. reverts to SF, the housing folk can't negotiate for it because SF doesn't have the power to get out of the agreement that got them the golf course property in the first place. However, some of the land, I believe the land near Lakeside Ave., was bought with part of the \$80,000. It's possible that that portion is not subject to the limitation that encumbers the original 410 acres. Maybe a judge, after a complicated, lengthy, involved and costly review of the situation will decide SF can sell or give the land for the CoHousing project. Even

if it happens, it may not be worth it.

If the CoHousing advocates succeed in their endeavor, they may wish they hadn't. The people on the San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission made a good choice when they put a golf course on the property. The lowlying land is subject to frequent flooding, which isn't a problem for a golf course but can be a problem for housing. Pacificans have gotten in trouble before because someone insisted on building homes on old lake beds and flood plains. Three times in 30 years, the front of Linda Mar has flooded, because Oddstad Homes built houses in an old lake bed. Lake Matilda is still there.

It all started when a forty-niner from New York, George Sharp, met an Irish girl named Honora and they married.

George bought sand lots cheap, and they jumped in value when Golden Gate Park was built. Honora wanted to memorialize George and express her gratitude for the park, which added a great deal of value to land in western San Francisco. In an involved sort of way, Sharp Park Golf Course is there because Honora liked Golden Gate Park.

I think the golf course is a better memorial than some overdone Victorian-era gate. I don't think Honora would be teed off if she knew what happened.