

AS I SEE IT: Bob Ring

AS I SEE IT is an occasional Canyon Views column by Laguna Canyon Foundation's dedicated board members and volunteers. Board Member and Treasurer Bob Ring joined the board in 1994, becoming vice president and then treasurer in 1999. He also serves on the Foundation's Estate Planning and Gifts Committee. A Leisure World resident, Ring is a City Council member and former mayor of the City of Laguna Woods and former president of Third Laguna Hills Mutual and Golden Rain Foundation, a governing bodies of Leisure World. Bob and his wife, Bette, named the Foundation as a beneficiary of their charitable remainder unitrust along with the California-Pacific United Methodist Foundation.

In 1994, when Laguna Coast Wilderness Park was less than a year old, development of the Laguna Laurel property threatened to eliminate another corner of Orange County's vanishing open space. Because I was president of Third Laguna Hills Mutual, I promised its members to help in the fight to save the land. I had never been involved with an environmental organization before. But I saw that Laguna Canyon Foundation had been effective in helping to establish the park and made a business decision to join the board.

My choice made sense because the Laguna Canyon Foundation Board had developed a way to work together effectively for a common cause. They seemed to have no personal agendas. President Michael Pinto and Executive Director Mary Fegraus encouraged two-way communication between such diverse groups as the public, city, county and developers, making these stakeholders look to the Foundation for solutions.

It was a cooperative process that made things happen. In 1996, after voters failed to pass the \$33 million state bond measure needed to purchase the final Laguna Laurel parcel, we joined the city of Laguna Beach, Laguna Greenbelt, Inc., Laguna Canyon Conservancy, Leisure World and Orange County to issue a joint statement airing our concerns about development on the remaining Laguna Laurel land. Our united front was probably what finally influenced Donald Bren, president of The Irvine Company, to donate the final Laguna Laurel parcel for public use in November 2001.

In my years on the Board, I've seen our approach become more and more innovative. By encouraging communication between various groups, we've been able to nurture existing bonds and establish new ones. By avoiding partisanship and confrontation, we've been able to keep information flowing and continue progressing toward common goals. The James and Rosemary Nix Nature Center is an example of what we can achieve--an example of why my original business decision has grown into a love affair. My involvement with the Foundation is not only for today; it's for my grandchildren and their grandchildren.