

BE INFORMED, IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE TO HELP

Editorial, February 27, 2016

I am an 85 year old advocate for mobile home owners who live in rental parks on leased land. I devote much of my time championing the protection of their rights and fighting against the abuses and transgressions inflicted upon them by park owners, managers and investors. There are other things I would much prefer to do with my time and energy, but I just cannot ignore the need for someone to fight for what is right. It is a statewide issue that is the result of the legislators being bought off with the unearned and obscene profits from our rents. But it is also the result of massive apathy by victims themselves. No doubt that years of losing and the hopelessness of fighting city hall have led to the apathetic morass that prevails today.

Our government will tell you that there is the Mobilehome Residency Law (MRL) and Title 25 providing protection of your rights. Largely influenced by the park owners, it is a facade that is deceptive and full of loopholes. Too often are rights given to homeowners and then taken away by allowing Park Owners to do so in the rental or lease agreements, or in the 20 to 30 pages of Park Rules and Regulations. Even when the MRL does supposedly provide protection, Park Managers and Park Owners knowingly violate those protections because they know that the Homeowners only recourse is to hire an attorney and file a law suit. There is no true enforcement without risking extensive legal costs, retaliation by the Park and intimidation with threats of eviction.

City municipalities are also complicit because they do not understand the totally unfair treatment and absence of justice suffered by mobilehome owners, and they do not want to be bothered. The general public looks down their noses at mobilehome dwellers (trailer trash) in spite of the fact that it is a valuable source of affordable housing that is until greedy investors drive the space rents up to ridiculous levels.

So what is the solution to this huge problem? Some of us believe that an effort must be made to correct these problems and that the apathy problem is an obstacle that must be overcome if success is ever going to be achieved. It is essential that all of us must be better informed. In other words to get our heads out of the sand and be aware of the abuses that many of us suffer and to be ready to put forth a little effort to stop them. It doesn't mean that you have to be a leader or even that you must put in X number of hours fighting for your

neighbors. Be informed, at least enough to send an e-mail, or a letter, or to make a telephone call to your elected officials. Maybe even to throw in a couple of bucks for the cause (everything takes money) to offset the Investors use of your rent monies to buy influence or support for the status quo.

Some parks are run fair and square and do not abuse, cheat or intimidate their residents. God bless them, and hopefully they stay that way. But if they are one day purchased by one of the evil corporations wreaking havoc on many other parks, they will not be good places to live. Mobilehome owners need to recognize that even though they are scattered all over the landscape, they are in fact, a community. What happens to one, affects all of them, sooner or later. If a park in the next County or City has their rents raised to \$1,800.00 per month from maybe \$600.00 per month a couple of years ago, it does or should concern you too. If turn-over rent increases, upon the sale of a home, adds \$200 or \$300 to the space rent being paid, the home may take a loss in equity (sale proceeds) of \$20,000 to \$30,000, if indeed it can even be sold. Don't think for a minute that that does not impact the value of your home. These are just a few of the ways a homeowner can suffer economic loss. Park Owners also want to have homeowners pay for tree removal, replacement of retaining walls and other expense items which are not the responsibility of the homeowner, who rents the land space. True, your ox may not be being gored today, but that can change overnight.

Being informed is very important. That can be fairly easy to overcome. Just read the park newsletter or flyers distributed by the HOA Board, or attend HOA meetings (a 60 or 90 minute meeting once a month is not too much to ask). Join your HOA, and any regional association and state association like GSMOL. Visit websites dedicated to homeowner issues. One outstanding website is MHPHOA.com. By being informed, when a issue arises that gets a rise out of you, you are better equipped to deal with it and to offer support. Don't leave everything to others like me to do all the work, I could drop dead tomorrow. I don't intend to, because I will keep on fighting for justice as one of my reasons for living. How about joining me and help to overcome apathy, at least in your house?

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