

## TIME TO GET PROACTIVE

*By Lloyd Rochambeau, President*

Mobile home owners are essentially a group of people trying to live out their lives in affordable housing that provides for a degree of privacy and freedom. A mobile home can be a factory built home, built in the mid-sixties, a new manufactured home built just this year, or a private "apartment" with as little as 700 square feet or a triple-wide over 2500 square feet, the value or cost ranging from \$10,000 to as much as \$400,000. It could be either situated on a small plot of ground called a space, which can be owned or leased. An interesting note is that the space between homes can be 15 feet to 30 feet or more. That is interesting because many new luxury stick built homes costing \$800,000 and up may have only about 10 or 12 feet between houses.

Mobile or manufactured homes on owned land do not suffer the same problems as those on rented spaces. The rental parks are usually owned by private parties or investors who manage and rent the spaces in an effort to maximize their income and profits. There are different types of owners. Some are content to make a reasonable profit and to provide a pleasant living environment, while others could be called greedy landlords who care little about the homeowners renting their space, so long as they can rake in as much profit as possible. A good example is Lakeshore Gardens in Carlsbad, once owned by Charles Bronson, the actor. Charlie was a good landlord, maintained a nice park where rents were in the \$700 range. After Charlie passed away, I believe his family took over. While they continued to make the park a nice place to live, they have over the past few years, increased the rents to a range of about \$1200 per month. This is not an oceanfront park, although it is close by. Rents of \$800 to \$900 per month would be more reasonable.

But I digress. I was just trying to give a little background for some of my ideas or suggestions that cause me to advocate for a more proactive, rather than a reactive approach for mobile home owners. When a park owner is guilty of trying to gouge the homeowners or does not properly maintain the park and the environment is allowed to deteriorate, the homeowners are left to react in whatever ways are open to them. Complaining to the park manager or the park owner often results in them being ignored. Please keep in mind that complaints against your neighbor's barking dogs or excessive noise are not complaints that are among the types of complaints which are involved here. The kind of violations I am referring to are those wherein the Park Manager or the Park Owner are violating our rights and protections provide for by laws.

HCD (Housing and Community Development) needs to be notified and if you go on-line to the [HCD.ca.gov](http://HCD.ca.gov) there is a Mobilehome Park Complaint form which can be completed. Whether the Ombudsman responds (who cannot enforce the laws), it may also require the City wherein the park is located to take action.

Most often, homeowners are told it is a civil matter and that you need to get a lawyer to help you. I do not agree that a lawyer is required. I would provide a copy of the complaint to the City, and another to GSMOL and of course to the HOA of the park and any regional mobilehome owner association. Complaints need to be specific and provide reference to the MRL and/or Title 25 or any other law being violated. While no guarantee of action supporting your claim can be made, you will at least have called it to their attention. I almost forgot, you also need to provide a copy for the Park Manager and the Park Owner. Many homeowners do not have funds for an attorney and should not be expected to seek legal

help to enforce the laws being violated. If drunks are defecating and urinating on the lawn and sidewalk in front of the Mayor's house, does he need to get a lawyer to get it stopped?

First off, I contend that every park should have a homeowners association. If there is a city wide group such as we have in San Marcos, which can be more effective than trying to go it alone. In fact, we have discovered that the City's Rent stabilization ordinance requires each park to have a Homeowner's Association to be covered by rent review. There is also GSMOL. the Golden State Mobile-home Owners League. Membership by as many homeowners in your park as possible, should be the goal of the HOA, plus a city-wide group, and GSMOL. These minor membership costs could be likened to insurance. Participation, involvement and unity are important and needed to counteract apathy. We also need to overcome fear of retaliation, which is as big a problem as apathy.

Since our channels for reacting are so limited, and unproductive, we need to find other ways to get help. Being proactive means more work, but no one else is going to help us if we do not help ourselves first. How do we do that? I have some ideas, which may seem cockamamie to some of you. I would also like to hear any ideas you may have as well.

We should also start pushing for legislation to require minimal training for Park Managers. I believe homeowners in the State of Washington are advocating for this.

I also read somewhere that legislation is being proposed to grant Manufactured Home owners the same property rights as other real property owners. Financing and other issues need to conform as well. We have virtually no property rights, yet our collective investment in our homes equals or exceeds the investments of the Park Owner. We can change things, but we need unity that gives us numbers because as individuals we have little or no power.

There are surely other ideas that could help us attain our rightful place in the scheme of things. This is a feeble attempt to stir the pot, but it will take an effort by many homeowners to get the ball rolling. I hope there are hundreds or thousands of you willing to step up and make the effort to improve our lives. We need to use every vehicle available to us in our efforts and leave no stone unturned as we fight for rights, and a little respect. We can bury our heads in the sand, or we can draw a line in the sand to protect our rights and our investments. The choice is ours.