

Santiago Canyon Road Bridge Dedication

Linda May

A little bridge, on a county road, doesn't seem like it would be a big deal in the grand scheme of things. We don't usually think of bridges when we picture world changing events. They are mostly utilitarian and unremarkable. Yes, there are exceptions... artistic and sentimental, like New England's covered bridges, Golden Gate Bridge, and London Bridge.

And bridges serve as useful metaphors, bridging gaps, building bridges, burning bridges, crossing bridges... It seems like there are more metaphors using bridge than there are historic bridges.

But this bridge is utilitarian, it is a metaphor, and, most importantly, it is historic. This bridge, this beautiful bridge that gracefully guides us and keeps us safe as it allows us to see the scenery below, is an example, no, it is a screaming celebration, of what can be accomplished when people who care about a place are given an opportunity to shape the changes that are made around them.

Some of America's favorite sports are making fun of bureaucracies, joking about government work, expressing disdain for meetings, and impatience with nitpicking decision making. But this bridge exemplifies why all those elements are important. If it were not for the willingness of our government official, Bill Campbell, to hear our voices demanding something different; and the participation and patience of county staff who helped us through a cumbersome decision making process; the hard work, skill, and careful eye of the builders; and most especially if it were not for all the canyon neighbors who cared about this community enough to meet and read, talk and review, and listen and decide,

we would not have this architectural addition, this rusty old-looking bridge that fits so perfectly into our rustic rural character. We could have had a bridge that looked like a freeway over pass, but instead, because of this historic process, we have a work of art.

This bridge turned out even better than anyone of us could have imagined and it is a testament to what can be accomplished when people are not satisfied with the status quo and speak up, expect better, work together, listen to each other, and don't quit until we find the best of all possible solutions. This bridge is a monument to the beauty that is created when the uniqueness of our setting is recognized and exalted. It is a special bridge for a very special place. And it is such a good fit it looks like it has been here for 100 years.

It is my humble wish that this bridge will be an historic bridge, that it will mark the moment in canyon history when decision makers from outside our canyons gave us a chance to show what can be accomplished when we have a say. We really do know what is best for us, for our community, and working with us, truly working with us can produce remarkable results. However different, and maybe at times difficult, it is to work with us, this beautiful, utilitarian, metaphoric, historic bridge shows us that government/community collaboration will far exceed anyone's wildest imagination.

Thank you Bill Campbell for, listening, believing, and giving us the chance; for opening the door for this process,

Thank you county design staff for entering uncharted territory and patiently working in collaboration with us amateurs,

Thank you construction crew for carefully implementing this unique design,

Thank you community co-conspirators for trusting the process, speaking up, and goading us at times to keep the Sil/Mod Plan in mind.

There are some pioneers in this community betterment joint venture who should be acknowledged by name:

Mark Levy and the Open Space Committee of the Silverado Modjeska Recreation and Park Board

Rich Gomez of the Santiago Canyon Conservation group

Community members who give tirelessly of their time and wisdom, Judy Myers, Fran Williams, Sherry Medick and others too many to name.

Déjà vu occur