

## **A CASE FOR THE NATIVITY**

**By Jeff Newsome**

In my capacity as President of the Big Bear City Community Services District I have placed an agenda item on the schedule for the December 6, 2004, meeting of the CSD. The Board will discuss the possibility of allowing a Nativity to be placed by the Christmas Tree in the small park next to the Big Bear City Fire Station during the holidays. Reactions to my motion have ranged from strong support to shock that I would advocate the violation of the separation of church and state. More commonly, people have said, "It's a good idea, but you are going to get sued."

Maybe so, but some things are worth being sued for. Like society as we know it, or our children's future, or heck, just the ability to enjoy the holiday as always have. Frankly, I'm tired of being pushed around by the left wing litigious organizations like the ACLU. I'm fed up with people who don't live here dictating the way we conduct our lives. It's not right. More over, it's not in keeping with the basic tenant that United States citizens should be able to live their lives with a minimum of intrusion by the government. I worry that if the soldiers of the extreme left are not stopped, our lifestyles will be affected and our freedoms will diminish. Where will it stop? This year, it's the Nativity that disappears from public view. Next year, what, Christmas as a national holiday? I believe its time we took a stand, and I hope the majority of our community will support me.

But honestly, I don't think we will be sued. For one thing, we are a very small community, and probably not worth the time of those who would deprive us of a seasonal expression of faith. Also, I plan to make the same area available for displays by persons of other faiths. I hope the town square will be decorated by a Star of David, a Star and Crescent, and other appropriate symbols, thus embracing all cultures in the valley. Lastly, the Nativity will not be purchased or maintained with public funds. If no Nativity is offered by a member of the community, Director McDonald and I will jointly purchase one with our own funds. That should satisfy those who fret over church and state separation.

It is true, the Nativity, with a tiny baby Jesus basking in the glow of his parent's love and the adoration of all around, is a religious symbol. But it is also an acknowledgement of all that is good in our society. To me, the Nativity spans

faiths, just as Christmas itself does. Although the very name means a mass in celebration of Christ, I have many friends of different faiths, and some with no faith at all, who celebrate Christmas. When they see a Nativity displayed in a secular area, they are not offended. Most see it simply as a symbol of why we celebrate the season.

Nativity displays also recognize our culture and allow us to establish continuity from generation to generation. Regardless of how one feels about Christianity, it is the rock on which our society was built. When you wake up in the morning, a free citizen in the greatest country the world has ever known, you have Christianity to thank. Our forefathers were Christian men, and when they, in a flash of brilliance I think was inspired by God, set down the tenants that guide our government today, they did so using Christian paradigms.

If approved by the CSD Board, the Nativity in our square should make us slow down during this hectic season, pause, and consider why we celebrate at all. We should recall that the love of our fellow men is truly a gift from God, whichever god you worship, and a glimmer of hope for world peace. The traditions and faith that sprang from the birth of the baby in the manger have given us the great republic we enjoy today and the ability to live together, with all our myriad faiths, in relative harmony. I, for one, believe that deserves recognition by our community.

## **ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE FOR NATIVITY**

(12/7/04)

65th Assembly District Candidate Jeff Newsome feels the Nativity should be displayed in his community. Yesterday, while acting in his capacity as President of the Big Bear City Community Services District, he made a motion to allow private individuals to place a nativity in the town square. Newsome reiterated the arguments he made for a nativity in a letter he placed in the Op/Ed page of his home town newspaper, the Grizzly (attached).

The motion was seconded and a spirited discussion ensued. Newsome said, "I worry that if we do not respond to misguided attempts by well meaning liberals to restrain traditional lifestyles, our children's world will be a hollow place indeed." (Newsome is the father of three teenage children.) "I just feel we, as a

community, need to acknowledge the reason we celebrate Christmas. I don't want to exclude anyone, in fact I welcome folks of other faiths to add to our display."

President Newsome called the question and the Board voted 4-0-1 (abstention) to invite members of all faiths to place a symbol in the square. At present, two Christian groups have voiced the desire to provide a nativity for the Big Bear City square.

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