

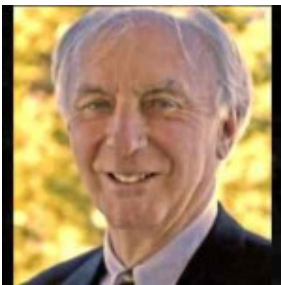
# Gangs take their toll on society

By Ted Long

I think it is safe to say this week's session, session seven of the citizens' academy, on gangs made the whole program worthwhile. This session was led by Deputy Carol Edwards.

She has been doing the job for over 20 years. Not only did she bring a professional touch to the issues, but a personal one. She definitely knows the problems and the people.

We saw, through a video presentation, gangs that are present in El Dorado County. And there are a lot. Everything from the Hells Angels to the Bloods.



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Graffiti was also explained and for the first time I understood what I thought was meaningless waste of paint. While it is a waste for society, graffiti has great meaning and usefulness to the gangs. At one time, here at the lake I strongly supported program to give graffiti artists a place to paint other than our public and private building. While a great idea, it in no way will really affect gang graffiti, which is used to communicate, to mark territory and to honor their falling comrades.

Edwards is of the opinion that we will not stop the growth of

gang activity and expressed our only hope in terms of the very young, to some how let them know what it really means to be in a gang. Most of the reasoning for the success of the gangs is placed on with the lack of discipline or the profit motive. There was little discussion of society's role. For example our continued reliance on what our founding fathers gave us in 1776, the Constitution.

While I would be the first to argue, and have on many occasions, for the basic rights granted, such as free speech, religion and the right to bear arms I doubt that our founding fathers could or did foresee the world as we live in it today. Perhaps, it's time to relook at all these rights with modern times and consequences in mind.

Laws are passed for what appears to be a "good reason" – a teacher abuses a student, a parent goes too far in disciplining a child, so we pass a law. The problem is that now no teacher dare discipline and no parent dare raise his hand or he they may end in jail, in other words we have "throw the baby out with the bath water."

A parallel example that most people are familiar with is the laws to support the handicapped. Well indented and important, yet with them came a flood of attorneys that know sue people and create a mess.

Most of us who are over 50 remember walking through our neighborhoods actually talking to people. Today many neighbors don't know who lives next door. The recent Cleveland discovery of three women held for 10 years makes my point.

The rise of gangs in my view is very much related to the break down of the family and the neighbor concepts in our society. We have literally made it a crime to be interested in someone else. Combing this with modern communication, travel and the need for two family income and you have a problem. Ask yourself, "If we could start over fresh, what would we do?" In

there lays the answer.

Whatever we do or don't do, the fact is gangs are a serious issue for us and the country. If you belong to a club or group, I strongly suggest you call Carol Edwards at (530) 621.6041 to schedule a presentation. This is information you need to know.

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