

# Tahitian Village had

Thursday, September 3, 2008

## interesting beginning

BY G.A. LEWIS

Special to the Advertiser

*(Editor's note: As a relatively new Bastrop resident, G. A. Lewis became intrigued with Tahitian Village and its history and made inquiries. This series presents a bird's eye view of Tahitian Village, past, present and future, for the benefit of readers who share a curiosity about this unique and beautiful community in the Lost Pines of Bastrop County.)*

### Ranch to Residential

About 80 years ago, when TC Hoffman was born, his family raised cattle out of a modest home which, if it still stood today, you'd find on the little island out back of the Sim Gideon Power Plant on Lake Bastrop.

With a sun-furrowed brow and toil-swollen sausages for fingers, Hoffman today looks like hard work personified, and for good cause. From an early age, he began a practice of wrestling every kind of living he could pry out of the jealous ground around Bastrop County.

That kind of life can make some men hard and sullen. But as soon as you get to know TC even a little bit, you find that his eyes twinkle and he laughs with a secret-knowing chortle upon even the slightest excuse for amusement. He has

served on every kind of committee his church or the Lion's club can come up with. He volunteers readily and tends to get things done.

With that kind of background and work ethic, you could almost plot the line that would lead him to start working on W.W. McAllister's ranch on May 1, 1950. Hoffman recalls that McAllister was once the mayor of San Antonio and founded the San Antonio Building and Loan Association. Serving as the McAllister's foreman, Hoffman reported to McAllister's son-in-law in his daily rounds of managing the land and the herd.

"Mrs. McAllister and her mother were behind the sale of the ranch to Time Wealth," Hoffman said. So, at the end of April 1970, almost exactly 20 after Hoffman was hired, McAllister sold his 3,700-acre cattle ranch to Time Wealth Corp., a business partnership Hoffman says included brothers Jack and Welcome Wilson, plus Jack Valenti (yes, that Jack Valenti), Bob Smith, Johnnie Goyen and Bob Marlowe.

The ranch was roughly everything between Texas 71 and the Colorado River from just shy of where Jackson Road is today, and eastward to a few hundred yards past what

is now McAllister road. Essentially, everything from Pine Forest Phase II (the area south of "Beer Can Hill"), out to and including ColoVista. In the middle of all that sits Tahitian Village.

The McAllisters were not the only employers who found Hoffman to be the kind of hard-working, dedicated employee you want to keep around. It is a point of pride with Hoffman that he kind of conveyed as part of the property deal, to remain on salary for one year. He went directly from tending cattle and mending fences to bulldozing the land into submission, ultimately forming many of the streets, ponds and fairways that comprise ColoVista and Tahitian Village. Much of this was done, according to Hoffman, under the direction of Time Wealth's engineer, Bob Marlowe.

Marlowe, Hoffman said, had spent some quality time in Hawaii and was so enamored of that experience that it inspired him to model this snazzy new urban development east of Bastrop with a Polynesian motif, despite the poor resemblance it had to any tropical setting. Hoffman said Marlowe brought back a Hawaiian dictionary with him and consulted it regularly.

Mr. Marlowe is no longer with us. However, his son, Robert Marlowe, of Tetra Surveys & Appraisals in Bellaire, Texas, recalls working on the site with his father during his college years. "It was a beautiful place, but full of brush and poison ivy." He says his father "had fond memories of his time in Hawaii. He used to carry a tourist's map around with him," in his reshaping of a central Texas cattle ranch of Loblolly pine trees and brambles into his determined vision of a south Pacific Shangri-la.

The senior Marlowe platted lots and laid out streets with names like "Kaanipali," which one Hawaiian dictionary interprets as, "a cliff dividing the land." Google Maps indicates it is a resort area in the northwest corner of the island of Maui. So, perusing a Hawaiian dictionary is not always a sure a method to understanding Tahitian Village. However, consulting a map or visitor's information center can help explain street names while providing some insight into Marlowe's vacation highlights.

Perhaps nothing can explain how some of the streets were laid out with respect to the topography or, as some suggest, a lack of respect. Hoffman says he asked Marlowe why he didn't find out where the hills and the gullies were before dividing the property. "Course he couldn't give me a straight





Staff photos by Terry Hagerty

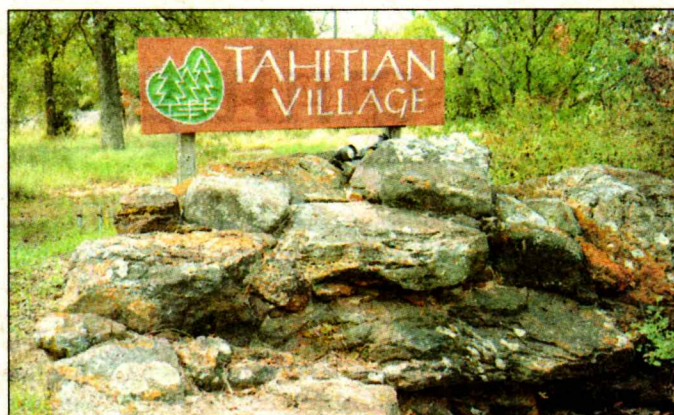
The main road into Tahitian Village is marked by beautiful stands of pine trees.

answer," Hoffman muttered, shaking his head.

Not long after clearing some land and grading some roads, frequently with Hoffman at the helm of some heavy equipment, Time Wealth sold out to the next visionary developer,

Property Investments, Inc. The value of Hoffman's expertise and knowledge of the terrain held up well. In fact, his contract was consistently renewed, even in lean years when not much was happening. In all, Hoffman stayed with the project for more than 20 years, pressing his muscles, supervisory skills and familiarity with the land into the service of one developer after another.

So a large section of the McAllister ranch became officially called "Tahitian Village," and was platted into 7,000 or so quarter-acre lots, some more vertical than others. Today there are 400 or so acres of the development project inside the Bastrop city limits, including the more lucrative commer-



Today there are 400 or so acres of the Tahitian development project inside the Bastrop city limits.

cial lots near Texas 71. The rest remains in the county.

Lakeside Hospital is inside Bastrop city limits. The spring-fed lake for which the hospital is named was actually TC Hoffman's idea. In the process of bringing Texas 71 through town, the road construction crew had hauled gravel for road material down from the Pine Forest, Phase II section, adjacent to where the hospital is now. In the process, they piled up all the rocks and brush they didn't want over to the

side and out of the way.

When it came time for the road crew to redistribute the refuse back over the landscape, Hoffman said he told them, "I tell you what. Leave the piles here and build me a lake in this creek." It took some logistical figuring but they sorted it out, pushing the debris into a strategic formation. No EPA or drainage impact studies; just do it. Man, those were the days, weren't they?

*(The next installment is "Selling the Dream.")*

Newspaper Article 2 of a 5 part series by G.A. Lewis on the history of Tahitian Village / transcribed below for reading purposes [printing allowed, but copy was very small print] from Bastrop Public Library's website, which took me to the newspaper archives not yet on microfiche or pdf format, but readable at link in parenthesis below.

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht252611/m1/7/?q=September%205,%202009>: accessed April 30, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Bastrop Public Library.

"The Bastrop Advertiser (Bastrop, Tex.), Vol. 156, No. 54, Ed. 1 Saturday, September 5, 2009 Page 7 of 12

By G.A.Lewis /Special to the Advertiser

George Reinemund is just the kind of tall, outspoken and gregarious fellow that comes to mind when people think of Texans, despite that he hails from Iowa. In 1972, Reinemund was living in San Antonio, working in insurance sales when he said he perceived an opportunity in real estate. He soon found himself working for Property Investments, a company out of Houston, selling residential lots, usually site unseen, as was the custom, on Lake Livingston. “They used to be able to sell land literally coming into people’s homes and showing them a map,” Reinemund recollects. “And that’s what we were doing in Livingston, Texas.”

In the 1970's if you had a pulse and a Texas address, you had a good chance of being chosen by land developers like Property Investments as one of the lucky winners of a swell prize. "They'd get these letters in the mail saying that they'd won a prize," recalls Reinemund, "and most of them came down here to collect their \$10,000 or a new car or whatever it was." You could claim your prize by coming out to visit a development site. People came in the hundreds. "But almost everybody won themselves a free stay somewhere," Reinemund claims. "All they had to do was get there."

Sometimes prospects were enticed with a special taste of the local culture to convince them to make the investment opportunity of a lifetime. “The Castle” was a popular eatery that was housed in the building that is now Cedar’s Mediterranean Grill.” For about \$2.50, Reinemund and Hoffman confirm, patrons could get a memorable chicken fried steak that seemed about twice the size of its platter and provided a perfect platform for a thick smothering of very tasty cream gravy. This left prospects with a feeling of abundance and helped encouraged similar feelings toward the potential for the Tahitian Village project.



However, one did not have to present in order to seal the deal on a Tahitian Village lot. Many lots were sold, site unseen, to excited buyers hailing from nearly every corner of the world- except Bastrop. In those days, Reinemund estimates that “maybe 2 lots in 1,000 were sold to anyone who lived in Bastrop County.” “Locals didn’t much care for Tahitian Village,” Reinemund attests. He illustrates with a local version of “The Big Mac Index,” used by The Economist. “We charged three or four dollars for a hamburger, french fries, and a drink.” Down the hill in Bastrop proper you would pay half that amount. “They thought it was an expensive deal. And who in the world would want to pay six or seven thousand for a lot that you could have bought five years earlier for two thousand?”

As with most ventures, there were those who had better success than others with closing the sale on a lot in Tahitian. TC Hoffman tried his hand at land speculation sales but gave it up after less than a month. He found it difficult to paint a compelling enough picture through which prospects could envision their dream. “There was good money, but there was too much lying going on for me.” Hoffman describes Reinemund as an exception to his rule where developers are concerned. “Most of these ‘fly-by-nights’ I call’em, they lie to ya. You might find one good one in a hundred, and George was him.”

Reinemund had no difficulty selling the potential of Tahitian Village. Over the course of a couple of years, he became Property Investments’ top salesman nationwide. Reinemund’s pitch was pretty simple, “Have you ever been to Bastrop or seen the Bastrop State Park?” he’d ask. “Well this is right across the street and it looks just like it.” Reinemund’s general experience with land is also a simple proposition. “You can take a piece of property anywhere. You buy it for \$1,500 per quarter acre or buy a golf course property for \$5,000 a quarter acre and put 10 percent down and 8 percent interest for 7.5 years. Then, if you add streets and water and electricity and telephone and a golf course and some green areas, generally the property will at least go up somewhat in value.” So it seemed reasonable to expect good things for Tahitian property owners.

Reinemund said his simple presentation worked so well that he only had to actually appear on the site about six times in two years. “I’d just offer a prospect the going deal, like a 10 percent discount if you went to see the property within 90 days. Then I’d call ahead to somebody on the site and tell them that a buyer was coming for their 90-day, 10 percent deal, and they’d get signed up.” Reinemund’s wistful expression suggested he wished it were that easy to sell property these days.

For the moment, Tahitian was a going prospect with lots selling hand over fist.

*(The next installment is, ‘Realty Reality’ ) “*

# Grand jury called in but no indictment on Tahitian land sales

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## Realty Reality

Amidst the turbulent financial crisis and high gas prices building around the OPEC oil embargo, explains George Reinemund, Property Investments went bankrupt.

Long-time Tahitian resident John McPhaul recalls that a massive fleet of road-building machines quickly disappeared. This must have seemed to property owners like a cold splash of water on any efforts to realize the Tahitian Village dream. Many people stopped making their payments on notes and taxes, eventually surrendering their property to the county.

Ervin Lehman and Ken Melbourne put things back together in 1975, doing business as "Tahitian Village Corporation."

George Reinemund reengaged in 1976 and by that time the sale of property site unseen was no longer permitted. Tahitian Village had a couple of houses on the ground, but they were not yet completed.

"July 4, 1976 we opened a club house which is now the daycare

center. It was built strictly to sell property, Reinemund said."

There was also a swimming pool and tennis courts installed. Reinemund recalls that Melbourne arranged to get Australian tennis player John Newcombe involved for a short time in a tennis program. Reinemund remembers that his wife, Marilyn, enjoyed helping out on the pro shop cash register and filling in the slow days playing against tennis pros brought up from New Braunfels. Operations were completely closed down in the winter.

## Grand jury

By 1977 Tahitian Village Corporation had engaged with a builder to put up some houses on choice lots. Reinemund was placed in charge of managing the erection of new homes. Such houses easily sold to retirees or couples craving a second home in the country.

About 300 people a week visited the property, mostly to claim their free prizes. This provided plenty of opportunity for sales agents to refine their pitches and persuade buyers to invest in the future of Tahitian Village.

Reinemund reckons that "guys must've spread it on pretty thick because of the stories I would hear later."

A spate of lawsuits on file in county court records against Property Investments and Tahitian Village Corporation through the 1970s and 1980s seems to attest to that assessment.

"Last part of '78 some





The beautiful golf course at Tahitian Village runs along the Colorado River and comes with a clubhouse.

people made some disparaging remarks to law enforcement agencies, and they had a Grand Jury investigation," Reinemund recalls. "I think they called it 'fence posting' or 'ghost posting,' where a guy would take you out and show you this lot that looks real good and end up maybe, from time to time, selling you another lot down the street that might be in a ravine."

Reinemund was asked to testify. His experience suggests that maybe the Grand Jury was in over its head.

"They asked me whether I'd 'fence post' any houses. I said, 'How could you do that? If I were selling you a house, don't you think you'd recognize the house if I were selling it to you?' That was the beginning of the end of the Grand Jury, once they started asking really stupid questions."

Reinemund recalls that the Grand Jury declined to pursue the charges which left behind more than a few unsatisfied investors with frus-

trated expectations.

"If I bought some lake property on some of those lakes that was never built, you know, I'd be offended too," he said. "That's just what happens in developments," Reinemund explains, "There's just too much money sometimes and people just don't follow the money."

Those trying to sell out found themselves in stiff competition with seasoned developers.

Ultimately, the tennis court and swimming pool were not enough to attract the volumes of buyers expected and needed to manifest Bob Marlowe's vision of a Polynesian playground.

Reinemund said the golf course has made a few valiant attempts at solvency over the years, but remains a challenge. A sod airstrip was attempted but never got FAA approval due to alignment issues, though there are rumors that it briefly enjoyed some attention from drug traffickers.

### Road troubles, funny names

In 1980, Reinemund opened his own offices and still operates near the corner of Main and Chestnut streets in Bastrop. By 1983 he had moved into his own home in Tahitian Village where he still resides. In 2009, the going price for an unimproved lot ranges between \$1,500 and \$20,000, some of which depends on how flat your particular quarter acre is.

By the time the economic downturn of the early 1980s severely constrained further development, many planned roads were not yet put in. Some planned roads have yet to appear even today but remain on an extended completion schedule.

Despite myriad challenges and issues, many Tahitian Village residents say they would not change a thing. They've adapted to the Hawaiian street names that are so foreign to many Central Texans' ears.

"Keanahalululu," for example, is a warrior of legend whose name can

be translated as "the cave of roaring; as wind traveling through a cave," according to Honolulu archaeologists T. S. Dye & Colleagues. It is probably more pertinent that Keanahalululu's name was given to a gulch on the northwest slopes of the Big Island where a tropical garden, "Pua Mau Place," is an active tourist attraction.

Nearly 40 years after TC Hoffman's career path veered from bulldogging cattle rancher to bulldozing trail blazer, the 7,000 or so original quarter-acre lots feature about 1,400 homes. Even if the remaining lots were combined and sold as half-acre properties with construction proceeding at the same rate of about 50 homes per year, Tahitian Village could not be completely built out until the year 2065, nearly 100 years after it began.

Not everyone is in a hurry about completing this development project. George Reinemund said he has spoken with a few speculators in recent years who bought lots from

Property Investments in 1972 or 1973 and still have never taken the trouble to visit their property.

Reinemund would be the first to tell you that he loves living in Tahitian Village. He said the road conditions keep traffic at safe speeds for his grandchildren and help moderate the rate of growth so that he and his neighbors may expect to enjoy plenty of peace and quiet under the Loblolly pines for many years to come.

The next installment is, "Tahitian's challenges: Earth, Fire & Water."



## TAHITIAN VILLAGE

# Tahitian's challenges: fire and water

BY G.A. LEWIS

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The biggest issues in Tahitian Village today are about nature's simplest elements: earth, fire and water. However, that is where simplicity ends. Tahitian's problems are complex and the right solutions are sometimes elusive.

## Water

Today, Tahitian water service is actually in very good shape, with a plentiful supply for the residents. Karen Pinard said it is also the best water in the county, but she may be a bit prejudiced. A Tahitian resident for 25 years, Pinard is a tall, sturdy woman with an upright carriage and an upfront demeanor. Her composed presence has served her well over the past 13 years in her role as general manager of Tahitian's water district.

As general manager she must regularly engage challenges from every side, including occasionally disgruntled residents and often demanding regulating authorities wielding un-

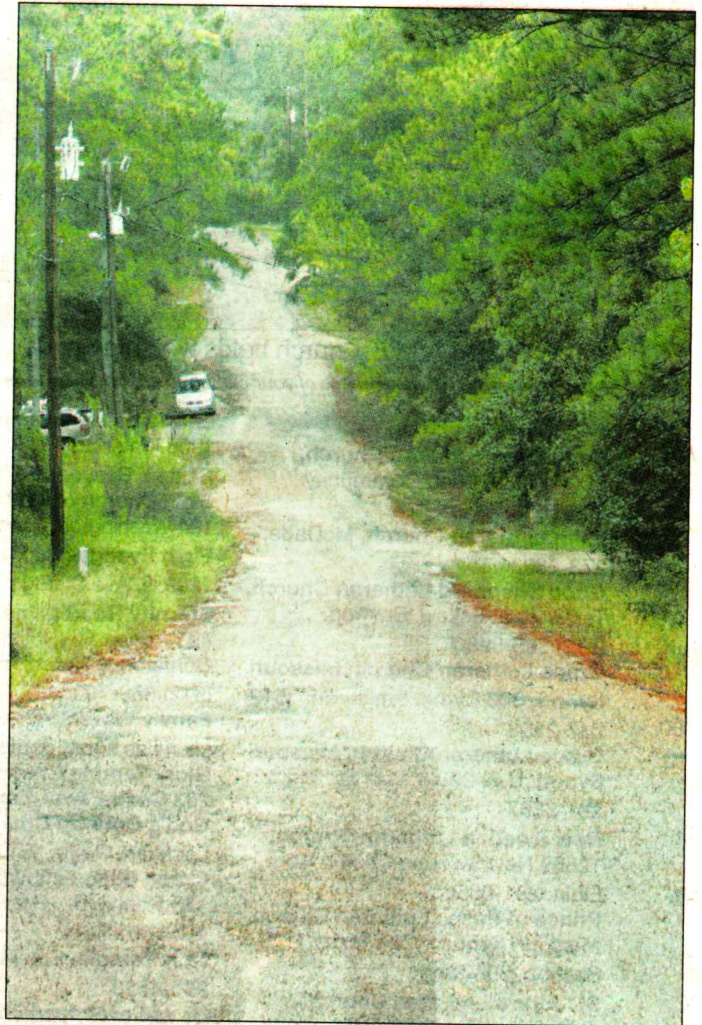
funded mandates on short deadlines. Pinard serves at the pleasure of the water districts' board of directors, five members elected by Tahitian residents.

According to a report provided by Pinard, in June of 1986 Bastrop County Water Control and Improvement District #2, a.k.a. BCWCID#2 ("water district" for short) was created after Tahitian residents got fed up with poor performance from the most recent pack of developers as well as Riverside Services, Co., an organization hired to install the subdivision's water system.

As soon as it was formed, the report details, the water board got to work making a proper water supply readily available in fairly short order. Pinard is especially proud that the district had the foresight to drill a water well at a time when they didn't really need one, despite that it cost \$750,000 to drill. "Today you'd spend twice that amount for a well," Pinard said.

Pinard acknowledges that wastewater services still have room for improvement but significant progress has been made. Some years back a couple dozen or so properties were "red tagged" for sewage standing in the yard. The hard caliche and gravel composition prevalent nearly anywhere uphill from the river is really no place for a septic system.

Pinard said that environmental quality authorities told the water district



Staff photo by Cyndi Wright  
Although this road is somewhat paved, it illustrates the topography typical of Tahitian Village, where many roads are not paved and those responding to emergencies could find it hard going.

to get the offending properties converted to sewer or they'd close down the subdivision. The problem got taken care of in time, so the water district and Tahitian Village survived to fight another day.

Today the water district contracts through LCRA for wastewater management from the City of Bastrop. It's a clunky but ef-

fective arrangement and streamlining it is not the most pressing issue from anyone's perspective, but it's still on the radar.

## Fire

Although they are not the most flammable substance you can find, an out-of-control blaze will make do on dry pine needles to continue its path of de-



struction. As a subdivision on the western edge of the Lost Pines, Tahitian has more than its share of this natural kindling.

A lesser known but also readily available fire fuel is "fatwood," also known as fat pine or rich pine. It is simply the core of a fallen pine tree that has decayed in just the right conditions so that its oils are converted into a turpentine-like resin. You can light a stick of fatwood with a single match, even if it is wet, and it will burn long and hot enough to ignite larger pieces of wood. Packaged and sold as a fire starter in other parts of the country, you can find fatwood all over Tahitian if you know what to look for. Many residents don't realize it is there.

USDA Forest Service case study #12, dated February 2004, cites Tahitian as a "wildland-urban interface (WUI) problem." The report contends that vacant lots contain highly flammable shrub fuels while rolling, narrow roads with dangerous intersections and confusing street names make access difficult for fire-fighting equipment.

A big fire south of the clubhouse in 1996 was the impetus that finally saw a fire station built in Tahitian Village proper, according to John Creamer, a prominent Tahitian resident. The fire station opened in 2002, after Creamer had been elected to the Bastrop city council.

John McPhaul, a 33-year resident with his wife,

Emily, said, "We live in the fourth house ever built in Tahitian." He said his home is made from the same red sandstone that FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps used to erect the Bastrop State Park buildings.

McPhaul spends a lot of time thinking about the future from every angle: political, financial, and ecological. From the look of his bookshelves, he has read more about trend analysis and projections than you are likely to find in any neighborhood library.

Having lived so long in a subdivision that has had more than its share of difficulties, McPhaul does not rely on outside help for much of anything. He grows most of his own food and employs wildfire mitigation strategies to help prevent unwelcome visits from an uncontrolled blaze. Such techniques are taught by the Texas Forest Service.

Monitoring a police scanner is one of several tactics McPhaul uses to keep track of goings-on around Tahitian. He says he commonly hears dispatchers and drivers struggling to navigate emergency personnel through streets with similar sounding names in a foreign language.

"Many Tahitian residents like the distinction of the street names," McPhaul explains. He doubts that changing the street names will ever get much serious consideration.

*The next installment is, "Earth - Tahitian's #1 topic."*



# Roads on minds of Tahitian Village residents

**G.A. LEWIS**

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The fullest expression of Tahitian's bright future is still down the road a ways – literally. You can't talk about Tahitian, today or for the future, without a thorough discussion about roads. They are on everyone's mind, mainly because the water faucets work fine and road conditions are much more apparent than wastewater and fire hazards.

Tahitian has 70 miles of roads. Some 30-plus years after Tahitian Drive was completed, only about half are paved. That's about a mile a year so far. At that rate, the roads should be completed around the year 2044.

The OPEC oil embargo and the ensuing financial collapse waylaid Tahitian's original developers, pulling the rug out from under the entire project. Subsequent developers, ill-prepared for the full responsibility but eager to make a buck, were either not required to post a bond to ensure timely and proper road construction or simply failed to deliver. To the surprise of some property owners, no one did anything they were not legally required to do.

The city and county appropriately declined to assume responsibility for maintaining poorly built roads. To residents it must have seemed like developers just whistled at the sky as they wandered off.

Since the water district had addressed water supply issues with such aplomb (and since no one else would touch these roads with a 10-foot pole) a small group of residents petitioned for a road district to be authorized.

In 1989, residents approved, by a vote of 196 to 66, for BCWCID#2 to become the only water district in Texas to also serve as a road district. A \$5 monthly fee was assessed on each lot in Tahitian to fund roads. Unfortunately, collection rates are only about half of what is owed,



Staff photos by Terry Hagerty

Home construction continues in Tahitian Village amid the sometimes unfinished roads.

according to the district's general manager, Karen Pinard.

Some 65 percent of property owners do not live in Tahitian. Many reside beyond the jurisdiction of Texas courts. Jeanette Gonzalez works in the office of attorneys for the Bastrop County Tax Assessor's office. She explains, "There is a special task force, headed by Noe Reyes, just for processing the Tahitian foreclosures. We've been working on it for probably three or four years, but we're talking hundreds of lots."

One could reasonably deduce that a good number of absentee property investors don't feel they get much bang for the buck. Something causes them to decline to pay their taxes, much less their annual dues to the water/road district.

Many property owners speculated on a future land value based on expectations far exceeding basic water services and roads. Having bought into the idea of a retirement paradise, they eventually found themselves entangled in a nasty catch-22 which now centers on roads.

Today Tahitian homeowners want better roads, but roads require money. Money for roads comes from homeowner's property taxes, but with 7,000 lots and only about 1,400 homes so far, there aren't enough homes to generate the necessary taxes. New homes will continue to be built only very slowly until they can be built on nicely paved streets.

It's an endless loop that keeps Ta-

hitian spinning its wheels on the back roads of survival instead of cruising the expressway to prosperity.

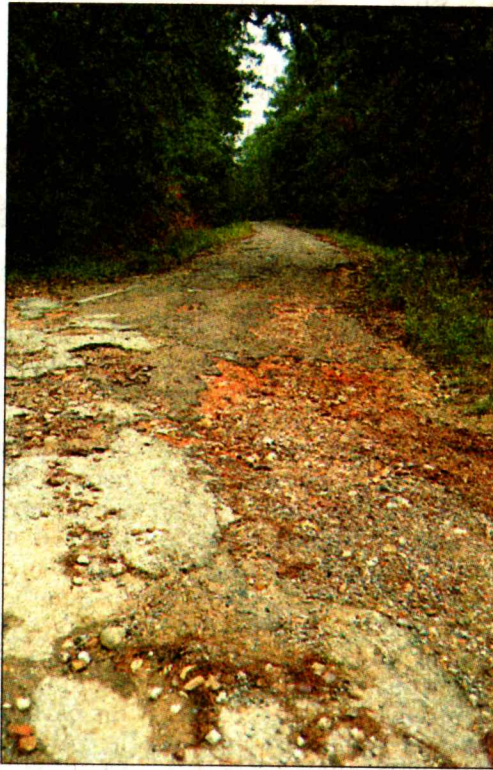
If Karen Pinard is ultimately successful as the road district general manager, she will have worked herself out of that particular job. The roads will be completed, the city and county will take over maintenance responsibilities, and the road district will cease to be.

However, between this day and that, someone has to cough up a big wad of cash. Pinard says that a \$14 million road construction bond should do the trick, amounting to \$400,000 per mile at private vendor prices. That would allow for the remainder of Tahitian's roads to be completed in 3 years or less.

The cheapest option is to contract solely with the county at about a 75% discount over the private rate. Willie Piña is County Commissioner in precinct 1, which includes Tahitian Village and 96 other subdivisions. Even if money were not an issue, Piña explains, "Most of those roads (in Tahitian) don't have enough right of way that we can get good drainage. Without good drainage, your road will just wash away."

At some point platting will have to be sorted out and some significant changes filed with the county to eliminate those impossibly vertical roads and negotiate





Dirt roads and roads that have potholes are of major concern to residents.

enough drainage right of way for the remainder.

Also, to contract road building with the county you have to get in line to get on their schedule. Each project must be prioritized and coordinated with all the other subdivisions and, in protected habitats, Piña said, the life cycle of the Houston toad. It could take the county another 30 years to complete the roads, even if money were no object.

Lots of thought is being applied to Tahitian's road issues. Local trend analyst John McPhaul sees an economic practicality for gravel roads. "It would be unrealistic to expect all our roads out here will ever be paved and perfect." Commissioner Willie Piña suggests, "There could be a future in processing recycled glass as cheap road material."

Until something is done to break the fiscal and practical logjams, Tahitian residents should not hold their breath until the road district sees its last sunset. "I feel secure in my position," says Pinard.

*The next and final installment is, "Looking to Tahitian's future."*



Reference found online and permission granted to copy or reprint:

Wright, Cyndi. The Bastrop Advertiser (Bastrop, Tex.), Vol. 156, No. 58, Ed. 1 Saturday, September 19, 2009, newspaper, September 19, 2009; Bastrop, Texas.

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht252615/m1/3/?q=The%20Bastrop%20Advertiser,%20September%20202009>; accessed April 30, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Bastrop Public Library.

## **“Tahitian Village / Looking to the future and the possibilities**

By G.A. Lewis Special to The Advertiser

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With its majestic loblolly pines and dramatic rolling hills overlooking unspoiled river panoramas, Tahitian Village could and should be the crown jewel of Bastrop. Instead, bad luck, neglect, greed, mismanagement, acquiescence and apathy have each taken a toll. Some residents accept the slow pace of progress, preferring to focus on appreciation for the beauty and quiet. They see development as a necessary evil. If you buy with your eyes open and expect no more than what you can see, you can be a happy property owner in Tahitian, and many are.

Others are becoming impatient and their ranks are swelling. For them the full promise of Tahitian Village is locked in a remote state of latency, like a diamond in the rough lying just out of reach, stuck in a quagmire surrounded by thorny vines. It seems to be waiting for just the right person to pluck it from its troubled situation and polish it into the brilliance that waits just below the surface.

Resident futurist John McPhaul detects an important shift. “The problems of Tahitian are no different than those of any other city or county areas,” McPhaul said. “The difference is that Tahitian residents are beginning to look beyond the property owner’s association and the water district for solutions.”

Some will disagree, but, for the sake of argument, let’s assume it is impractical for Tahitian to continue as it has since the mid-1970s. What will it take, for the sake of Bastrop as well as for Tahitian itself, to set things right so Tahitian can realize its full potential on a reasonable schedule?

### ***Attend Meetings***

An important part of the solution is for more residents to attend property owner and water board meetings and to cast ballots when they come up. Citizens who fail to engage don’t merely neutralize their power; they surrender it to others. County Commissioner [Willie] Pina said, “I encourage residents of Tahitian Village, and all citizens, to become more involved in civic matters and the election process. That is how elected officials and other governing bodies are informed about your concerns.”

One possible but rarely discussed direction for Tahitian is incorporation to establish a new tax base and new political control. Incorporation is not impossible for Tahitian, but it presents some challenges, not the least of which is to elicit the cooperation of 65 percent of property owners who live elsewhere.

A small but important portion of Tahitian near the main entrance on Highway 71 is inside Bastrop’s city limits. Resident and former Bastrop city council member John Creamer said most of that property was included in the original town tract



and can't be extracted. So an incorporated Tahitian could not earn important commercial taxes from properties along Highway 71 unless Bastrop offered them up as a gift.

As a practical matter, Bastrop has to annex Tahitian. Expanding to the west can't last forever and expanding to the east while skipping over Tahitian isn't in the cards either. Annexation into Bastrop is more a question of when, not if.

On a certain level, Tahitian Village is already a part of Bastrop, although that is not the way some Bastropians see it. Another way to see it is that, as Tahitian remains stagnant or sluggish in its journey towards fulfillment, it has the effect of holding Bastrop back by failing to attract new home owners who could increase local tax revenues.

Unless the Bastrop city council waits doggedly for someone else to first pay for roads, annexation represents a huge cost to the city at the front end. However, if Karen Pinard's \$14 million road bonds or another strategy can produce the desired result, then annexation or incorporation may be the best paths toward fulfilling Tahitian's potential.

Creamer points out that, in the past, new roads have promptly resulted in new homes being built in Tahitian. Suppose the 5,600 quarter-acre unimproved lots in Tahitian could be combined into half-acre lots and eventually become sites for 2,800 new homes. The total number of homes in Tahitian would triple over the existing 1,400 homes. Presumably, property tax revenues would increase proportionately.

If such projections are close to correct, then fixing Tahitian's roads would pay for itself many times over in a reasonable amount of time and in numerous ways. In the short term, annexation and completed roads would create a miniature economic boom with new roads and sewage connections generating a spike in new home construction.

Just glancing at the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce road map illustrates that annexing Tahitian would about double Bastrop's geographic footprint. Not inconsequentially, the city would also gain access to much-needed water supplies, which seem to be plentiful in Tahitian. Remember TC Hoffman's "lake" next to Lakeside Hospital? How does a lake form at the top of a big hill? "It's spring-fed," Creamer points out.

### ***So what's the holdup?***

Some qualified observers, most of whom prefer to remain anonymous, suggest a major drawback to annexing Tahitian is fear of political change. Christy Kosser, a resident of Tahitian and an outspoken former city council candidate, serves on the Bastrop Planning and Zoning Committee. Kosser observes, "Adding 3,000 new voters would definitely change the political landscape in unpredictable ways, and that would be a threat to those whose interests are vested in the status quo."

Nevertheless, change is coming to Tahitian and, through it, to Bastrop. Discussions with various Tahitian residents indicate that pressure is building for services that are commensurate with paying some of the highest combined tax rates in central Texas.

They want better deed restrictions enforcement, stepped-up foreclosures on properties showing decades of delinquent taxes, better law enforcement presence, more input into how roads are built and repaired, and more accountability for the expenditure of all kinds of revenues.

At the same time, the opportunities inherent in the wealth of Tahitian's location and natural resources are rapidly becoming too obvious for the ambitious to continue to ignore. For example, Bastrop is directly in the path of a "California tsunami" of citizens escaping that states collapse of public finances and services who are looking for a place to land.

Something's got to give. Watch out. Tahitian Village is coming."