

Brad Jacobs
Orange County

Retired Assessor Historical Questionnaire September, 2007

Describe your career before becoming Assessor.

During the 23 years prior to my 23 years as Assessor, I was a physicist & engineer & economist working in, managing, and leading R&D and advanced technology in various fields from corrosion & marine fouling to nuclear energy for power & propulsion of rockets & aircraft. Nuclear rocketry brought me to California with my new physics degree in 1955. I had committed my life to working for the defense of our USA, plus some other unusual projects such as filament-wound composite structures for manufactured housing & harbor structures, a microwave spectrometer for explosives detection, thin-film microelectronic circuitry, the misnamed "atomic battery" (my senior project at Rensselaer), the "dinosaur egg" aircraft crash recorder, a billion dollar coal gasification plant (not built), and the quantitative risk analysis for construction of the arctic gas pipeline.

You can see that i was fully prepared for elective office as a County Assessor -- ha! ha!

Actually, as assessor, I used everything which I ever had learned and/or experienced previously, including much that I had thought that i never would need or use -- so much for plans and predictions??!!

As defense secretary forester instructed: "always make an allowance for stupidity and the unforeseen".

In 1974, I turned down a big promotion, which had a move to Tulsa, OK required. After consulting my family, I took a much lesser job with a small, private, local company. Thus, I was here when those two preceding Assessors were indicted, convicted and jailed for corruption in office. "Chance is the instrument of God" (chemical & engineering news journal, October 1982.

Give the milestones of your Assessor career, year elected/appointed, reelection dates, date of retirement.

I was appointed to the remainder of an unexpired term on 01 December 1975, elected in June 1978, re-elected in June 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1994. Retirement began on 04 January 1999 after my Assistant Assessor, Webster Guillory, was safely elected.

Milestones of my assessor career included early recognizing the need for and strongly supporting proposition 13. My "dynamic homeowners' exemption, SB11X (1975/6), to address the same problem, was run over by SB1 (Baer). I made an economic case, which no one else mentioned. More importantly, I was the first assessor to carry out prop-13, delivering the compliant 1978 roll on 20 August 1978; 10 days before the legislated new deadline for roll delivery. The new "process-based" structure of the department enabled the personnel to work more interactively and effectively. Another milestone was the new assessment system brought on-line in 1989. All process work was done by task forces of department members. When a contractor for programming began work, task force members participated in all "design reviews" to assure that the resultant system would operate as department members wanted it to and regardless of proposed "canned solutions looking for a problem to solve" which were attempted by contractor. This was a "user-designed system" and, despite the warnings that the absence of outside expert designers doomed it to failure, we made it work, as we wanted. It also came in at half the time period and half the cost predicted by carping "experts". Department members were astonished and proud of the excellent result of their brains and work. (Everyone but us knew that "user-designed systems can't work"). I get my psychic income from helping people to be successful beyond their expectations - or even their dreams. Some other milestones included the putting into practice, in 1977, my invention of the paraprofessional class of "assessment technicians". Personnel dept and the board required some convincing, but it was approved and works very well in augmenting effective professional work (analogous to my engineering technicians working with engineers and scientists in the high tech business.)

The electro-optical file room was a first in county operations. Anaheim pd was first of all. Our Synercom system started us in computer-assisted mapping, followed by Intergraph and more.

Throughout my careers, my mission, as a manager or executive, has been to provide an environment conducive to "members of the enterprise" becoming better than anyone thought they could be, including themselves. "Mission accomplished" in the Assessor department, also. Their work made the department effective and successful in its work. Multidirectional mutual trust among department members, customers, and myself was the glue holding us together in our "roll unit factory". ... Every department member was important to me and to each other. Everyone understood that fact and acted upon it.

Describe your career, if any, after retiring.

After retirement, I began to work with a few small companies, mostly populated by people much younger than I am. I worked with a data communication & network access equipment maker as a management advisor, and later as a board member & chairman of the audit committee. (I have become knowledgeable in the "Aarbanes-Oxley" legislation and SEC interactions, building on my experience in investment banking/brokerage in the early 1970s. In 2003, I spent several weeks in Ukraine on economics research & analysis for an airport modernization & expansion to a cargo hub for a USTDA contract. This

appears to be proceeding toward construction, now. I am involved in a small, private company working in unusual electro-optical and photonic devices and systems. very unlike the electro-optical file room.

I really miss the Assessing Business, my interactions with the hard-working and effective personnel in the OC assessor department, the CAA discussions & controversies, county government, and my many meetings with assessees/taxpayers = customers (my 1976 definition was culture-shock.) I miss the SBE interactions, also.

Of all the accomplishments i have been blessed with, my 23 years as assessor for orange county has provided satisfaction & psysic income second only to my four fine children.

What was your relationship with your predecessor?

My relationship with my two immediate predecessors never existed. i have no interest in people who betray the public trust of elective office for self-serving, corrupt, personal interests. they are "zero value" people.

What was your relationship with your successor?

My relationship with my successor is close friendship. He was my assistant assessor, and, I would not have retired if I had not felt that the assessees of Orange County were in ethical, strong, and honest hands with him. I worked for his election in 1998, and following ones. We get together on many occasions. I could not allow some political hack to get into that office, again. I am happy to be available.

On a related note, I can be available to assist any assessor who might need someone to talk with about assessing operations, management, technology usage, or interactions with other entities.... I do miss the varied aspects and facets of being a county assessor. I loved the job.

Why did you run for assessor?

I put my name and professional biography into consideration by the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee charged with interviewing possible replacement Assessors because my friends & neighbors & business associates pressured me because they had had enough of politicians as Assessor. I had no political connections, had moved to Mission Viejo in may 1975, courtesy Holmes & Narver, where I was manager of business economics & representative to Anaheim C/C, and for whose parent company i turned down a big promotion to Tulsa, ok. I had no government service beyond volunteer committees in Altadena, Pasadena, Riverside, and Upland, mostly for schools. The mess sounded interesting and in need of cleanup and maintenance of cleanliness afterward..... no big job I ever had was gotten on a basis of prior experience in that job area - starting with nuclear rocket R&D and test facilities in 1955. Assessor looked like a great adventure, like going to CA from NY in 1955.

What do you consider your greatest accomplishments?

My greatest accomplishments begin with restoring the self-respect, confidence, and work output of the 278 people whom I found in the scandal-wracked Orange County Assessor department..... most were decent people who wanted to be productive and seen as honest public servants -- despite their stupid and corrupt leaders (two in a row). I am very happy that Orange County produced a roll of values, which complied with the requirements of proposition 13 and delivered it on 20 august 1978, 10 days before the legislated new delivery date. We were first to deliver a compliant roll; years ahead of some counties. The open-mindedness of department members to new technology, enabled us to be first with an "electro-optical file room", first with computer-assisted mapping operations, first in county government with a "project-matrix organization and management methodology, first.

On the wall of my conference rooms, since 1964, have been two signs I drew: (1) "people are everything" and (2) "idea + hard work= innovation".... I convinced department members to "interact across interfaces, don't stop at them". Also, "look upstream and downstream from your position in the production process and make work-life as easy as you can for the people you see there.... if we all do that, then, work will go very well and pleasantly for all of us.

What did you wish you could have done differently?

I would have liked to have coached and led the department members more rapidly from scandal-wracked and demoralized to best in our business. About 16 of my 23 years were needed to do that.

What do you remember most fondly about your time in office?

I recall most fondly my consistent and frequent interactions with department members, both individually and in small-to-medium-groups of unlikely composition. One such I composed was called "mid-managers and technical leaders. I met with them for an afternoon, monthly for sessions with managers from outside county government. We had a special interactive format, which everyone looked forward to. I enjoyed greatly interacting with every "member of the enterprise", as I referred to department members in the former bureaucracy, converted to enterprise modus operandi.

Were there any parts of your career that you wish had not happened?

The only part I wish had not happened is retirement and not being able to work with those 278 great people, whom i was privileged to lead to both individual and collective success in "the people's business".

What was your relationship with the CAA?

I always have supported professional organizations in the fields of my work. Thus, I went to the "apple valley" meeting very soon after I took office. I continued to participate in CAA meetings all over California, including regional meetings from Susanville to San Diego. I offered technical & intellectual support when I thought it could be helpful to any/all Assessors.

What is your recollection of the "Assessor Scandals" of the 1960s?

Very little because I was fully occupied at Lockheed Aircraft Service Company and Aerojet-General plus related professional associations in physics, economics, and corrosion -- where I chaired seminars, conferences, and lead R&D Projects. I later knew Joe Tenny, Chuck Williams, and other "cleanup" Assessors whom I used as role models and advisors for my "cleanup" work from Orange County's scandals.

Describe the pressure and stress of the Assessor's job prior to the passage of Proposition 13?

I never recognized "pressure and/or stress in any job I ever have held -- including Assessor both before and after Prop-13... I just do what needs to be done to deliver the results for which I am being paid (plus more). Leadership remains calm and business-focus at all times so that others can focus on their work. "The only constant is 'change' itself... plan for it and manage it through creativity and common sense, "stress & pressure" becomes an excuse for nonfeasance, misfeasance, & malfeasance... I don't buy into that at all!!

- **Did you actively oppose or support Proposition 13?**

I supported Prop-13 actively, making economic and socioeconomic arguments for its passage, which I never heard or read elsewhere. They remain validly applicable today!!

- **How did you feel about Proposition 13 now?**

I support Prop-13 100%, today and will fight for it strongly.

Were you involved in State or County politics, other than the Assessor's Office?

I have been lightly involved in county, state, and national politics since my days at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute but not as a contender for any office except Assessor for Orange County, CA. I had and have no other elective office of interest. ..Why would a person who has represented millions of county citizens in their personal financial/tax matters want to drop down to something lesser?????!!

- **Were there other offices you ran for while in office as Assessor?**

I had zero interest in any office other than Assessor -- still true.

What kind of person do you think it takes to make a good County Assessor?

Requirements include: 100% personal integrity, honesty, credibility, "other-directedness" instead of "inner-directedness", "wont power" to stay out of wrong endeavors and temptation, willingness to commit long hours to leadership of people and management of projects and money, being generous with credit to others for their work in support of your leadership because without them you are nothing. I could go on much more - but I stop now.

- **Should an Assessor be required to have an appraisal or real estate background?**

An Assessor need not be an appraiser or real estate person, in fact, it may be a negative to his/her effectiveness as a leader and executive manager, tempting him/her to substitute ego-driven judgment for the professional judgment of more capable people in the enterprise.

Please add anything that we may have missed in the interview that you think would be interesting.

"Don't allow the judgment of the herd to substitute for your own good judgment." ***The job of management is to make people capable of "joint performance"...."keep your ego under control and out of people's way".

I repeat from prior text..... I am available to assist any assessor in his/her professional duties because I love the assessment business, it was very satisfying.

I hope that this is not too long, boring, or self-centered. I have worked most days, since my 14 birthday; I hate not working.

THANK YOU, Mr. Assessor, the Honorable Jim Rooney for Amador County.

Sincerely,
Brad Jacobs
(Not in any box)