

Bill Copren  
Sierra County Assessor

## Retired Assessor Historical Questionnaire July, 2005

1. Describe your career before becoming assessor. *My father owned a sawmill. I worked in the woods and sawmills, performing every job from planting trees to pulling dry "s4s" lumber off a dry chain. In the meantime, I completed my B.S. and M.A. in history at the University of Nevada. I was working as a cat skinner when I went to work as an appraiser for Sierra County.*
2. Give the milestones of your Assessor career, year elected/appointed, reelection dates, date of retirement. *I was appointed Assessor, November 1, 1977, was elected in 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, I will retire in December 2006. I went through a recall election in 1981 which I won with well over 75% of the vote.*
3. Describe your career, if any, after retiring. *I will be writing a political history of nineteenth century Sierra County, fly fishing, managing family owned timberland and running a cattle grazing operation in Sierra Valley. I intend on making all the San Francisco 49er games and more of the Giants games when I have more time.*
4. What was your relationship with your predecessor? *My predecessor was Thomas Hogan. He was a great assessor and a better appraiser. He hired me and told me to learn everything since he was going to resign. About 20 months later he retired and I was appointed assessor.*
5. What was your relationship with your successor? *I have worked with Don Iversen for 25 years. He is my Senior Appraiser. My relationship is great and I am especially pleased that he decided to run for the Assessor position.*
6. Why did you run for assessor? *I believed that the timber industry was in its last stage and was looking for a job to match my educational qualifications. I had two degrees in history with a minor in mathematics. I believe the Assessor's Office is a perfect match since we generally deal with history and math.*
7. What do you consider your greatest accomplishments? *We produced an assessment roll annually with great accuracy and in compliance with the continuing changes in the statutes and the constitution and administrative rules for thirty one years. The assessor's office went from cabinets of empty manila folders to a complete paperless office employing optical imaging and electronic systems with complete records on every piece of taxable property in the county. All our records and maps are generated electronically now.*
8. What did you wish you could have done differently? *This is a difficult question. Without a great deal of thought, I do not know what I would have done differently.*

9. What do you remember most fondly about your time in office? *All of the great people I came into contact with. The wonderful people I worked with, my peers in other assessor's offices, the other department managers and the employees with whom I worked.*
10. Were there any parts of your career that you wish had not happened? *None that I can think of at this moment.*
11. What was your relationship with the CAA? *I believe that my relationship was good. I was elected president of CAA in 1993. In the later years, as the county fiscal situation became more difficult, I did not participate as much as I had in the 80's and 90's.*
12. What is your recollection of the "Assessor Scandals" of the 1960s? *My recollection is limited to the consequences of the scandals and the Saturday Evening Post article. My grandfather had been assessor here for 52 years. I learned from the records how he operated the office. Things were tightened up significantly subsequent to the scandals. The policing by the BOE became more comprehensive.*
13. Describe the pressure and stress of the Assessor's job prior to the passage of Proposition 13? *Forty seven percent of Sierra County's assessment roll was involved with standing timber. The county was just getting involved with a cyclical reappraisal program in the middle-late 70's. We worked hard to address the value of standing timber and the taxable possessory interests in USFS timber contracts under significant stress and pressure from the timber industry. The mass reappraisals of communities always resulted in difficult relationships with those reappraised versus areas that did not see any change. It was a completely different world prior to the creation of a yield tax for timber and the passage of Prop. 13.*
- Did you actively oppose or support Proposition 13? *I actively opposed Proposition 13.*
  - How did you feel about Proposition 13 now? *I believe that it is the principal cause of the financial problems that are endemic to the state of California today. Persons continue to want services and infrastructure but do not want to pay for same. California was a much greater state prior to the passage of Proposition 13. The present property tax system is inherently inequitable and unfair. The pre-prop 13 system could have been modified moderately to make it more fair and equitable. The anti-tax people are unrealistic reactionaries who have taken away from the standard of living of the majority of Californians.*
14. Were you involved in State or County politics, other than the Assessor's Office? *I was involved in county politics. I am a politician (elected official). I worked with the Democratic Party to elect local people. I was often involved in County Supervisor races and chaired some campaign committees. I also campaigned for certain tax overrides and bond issues.*
- Were there other offices you ran for while in office as Assessor? *No*

15. What kind of person do you think it takes to make a good County Assessor? *Should an Assessor be required to have an appraisal or real estate background? I believe that knowledge of property concepts are helpful but can be learned on the job. A good manager and an honest person with some understanding of property in the western cultural system is probably the best person for the job. They also must be good with people since we are all elected.*

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

\* Any interesting photos are encouraged. Please include description.