

View from the Perch

by Russ Sutton



HOW TO GET INTO TROUBLE WITHOUT REALLY TRYING



Russ Sutton

A few years ago my wife, Elaine, and I, purchased a piece of residential property where we could expand our hobby in Aviculture. This property is located in the County, is zoned R-4, and has no restrictions with regard to the keeping of birds, as most of the surrounding city incorporated areas do.

It was love at first sight. From the street you could see very little, as growing across the front, starting right next to the curb, was a 12' wide strip of plantings. In the front was a row of century plants, next was a row of taller specimen bushes and behind them even taller trees. Trees were also growing on both sides of the driveway creating a cool, dark tunnel in the hot summer leading to the garage in the rear. The residence was partially concealed creating excellent privacy. There was no parkway or sidewalk.

Little did we realize what we were getting into at the time. We have recently learned the plantings have been there 15 years or longer.

This fall the Century plants bloomed sending up a single stalk between 15' and 20' high. I was informed that when this occurs the plant will die and should be removed. This task appeared insurmountable for me to perform and as the days passed I continued to speculate as to how to solve my dilemma. All of a sudden one day it occurred to me that a former neighbor, where we had lived before, had had the city remove a dead tree from her parkway and a nice new tree planted, all at no labor or cost.

Viola! The perfect solution. I'll call the County and find out if they'll do the same. So I called my County Supervisor's office where I spoke with a nice gentleman who assured me that he felt sure the County Road Department would remove the offensive Century plants before they fell into the street. Some time later a County Road Department foreman arrived at my door. He informed me he wished to take some pictures of the plantings to show his supervisor. While the pictures were being taken, I followed him around, like a friendly puppy, asking questions, to which I received non-committal answers. He wasn't hostile or unfriendly, just close mouthed. This didn't alarm me, although it should have. By this time it was already too late!

A few days later, when I answered my telephone, the caller identified himself as the County Supervisor's

assistant and the same gentleman I had spoken with before. Then the axe fell. Every one of my beautiful trees and plants were growing on the County Road easement and would have to be removed. No, there were no funds available for them to remove them. They had been planted without permission and I was responsible for their removal.

The objective of this little tale of woe is to call your attention to the fact that the City, County, State and Federal Bureaucracies have so many laws, rules, and regulations they can enforce, when they wish to, that we the people no longer have the freedom of choice that is rightfully ours.

If we Aviculturists and the American Federation of Aviculture fail in our efforts to convince the bureaucracies at all levels of Government that our goals are just and proper, we will probably cease to exist.

The Los Angeles Times of February 20, 1975 printed the following item. "Parliamentarians of the nine countries of the Common Market recommended that their Governments take measures to limit the killing of migratory birds and OUTLAW THEIR CAPTURE by nets. Birds are hunted either as delicacies to eat or for sale as caged pets, particularly in southern parts of Western Europe. The members of the European Parliament also ended a week-long session in Strasbourg, France, by recommending that the community set up bird reserves in Western Europe".

It is highly doubtful that the Aviculturists have been considered in these discussions, or that they ever will be. Possibly any Western Europe restrictions will not affect European Aviculture at all. I don't know. I do know I'm against arbitrary and capricious rules and regulations passed by officials at any level who don't know what they are talking about, and have given no consideration as to how much Aviculture is contributing ■

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