

Cash Cow Walkabout

Country Lanes of Carmel Valley

The most recently announced completion date for closing the five-mile gap in State Route 56 — the missing link between Black Mountain Road and Carmel Country Road — is 2004. The east-west freeway known as SR-56 will finally connect I-5 with I-15, and Rancho Peñasquitos with Carmel Valley.

As those who have followed the story for years already know, that won't be the end of it. While traffic will flow more easily in some spots as a result, it will slow in others — unless more roads are built. Following completion of the four-lane system, crews will start widening SR-56 to accommodate a six-lane system.

There's more to come after the six-lane phase. "The ultimate

LOCAL EVENTS

project" (a CalTrans phrase) will include a median

where yet more lanes will be built. They'll be used for "additional mixed-flow lanes," "High Occupancy Vehicles" (i.e., carpools), or for something called "future transit," which may or may not mean mass transit.

There is even more planned for Carmel Valley and environs. The scale is unprecedented for San Diego. The number of lanes envisioned at the I-5/56 interchange is 17. At the I-5/805 merge it's 23.

The projected completion date for everything is 2020. At that time the finished system will be among the top three busiest freeway interchanges in California.

So it's hard to know how to react when you're told that a walk being conducted by Larry Forman on Saturday is called "Country Lanes of Carmel Valley." Do you laugh or cry? The 54-year-old Forman, who lives in Del Mar, is a cofounder of Walkabout International, the San Diego-based group that has been organizing walking tours for 25 years.

"In the early days, most other people out walking were burglars, prowlers, or social deviants," says Forman. "I remember when Walkabout started a chapter in L.A. I walked Beverly Hills with a group. We produced the scorn of the police; they descended upon us. When we first started here, I remember in Mission



Larry Forman in Carmel Valley

Hills, in the Presidio Park area, the neighbors would stick their heads out of their windows and say, 'What are you protesting?' Or: 'Did your bus break down?' Now people have come to recognize what we are."

He remembers, too, early walks he led in and around Carmel Valley, then known as North City West.

"I think the first walk I did in the area was in the late 1970s. We started at the train station in Del Mar and walked to Black Mountain — the Black Mountain — on Black Mountain Road when it wasn't what it has become. Parts of it were a dirt road, isolated. We

went as high up as we could get, and back. It was a good 20 miles, round trip. We enjoyed wonderful vistas of the ocean, we felt the winds, we looked at the beautiful mountains. The scenery was like what I imagine Mission Valley's was like before its development. There were cows grazing. Now Carmel Valley is a cash cow, as is Mission Valley, for industry, business, and highway construction."

The group will walk four to six miles. They'll visit Torrey Highlands Park, as well as a church and a synagogue with interesting architecture. Inevitably, they'll also

walk past some "cauldrons of construction."

The sites include housing developments: future neighborhoods of Carmel Valley. Forman finds "remarkable" some houses that are already completed. "I am reluctant to fathom an area where one house looks exactly like the other," he says, "and where it's impossible to be sure if you're on the right street. At least a dozen street names now begin with 'Carmel.'"

He doesn't exaggerate. *The Thomas Guide* for 2002 shows 16 such streets in the 92130 zip code area: Carmel Canyon Rd., Carmel Center Dr., Carmel Creek Rd., Carmel Grove Rd., Carmel Pointe... He calls this the "Carmelization" effect. "I think of caramel candy. Carmel is a sweet name that has begun to homogenize the area."

Forman thinks of another food when he drives north, past where the merge ends. "On the east side is a mountain that's been carved up like a piece of cheese." He knows that some change is inevitable. After all, his own family is growing. But instead of being carved, he wishes the landscape could be "sculpted."

Forman's eight-year-old daughter, Jenay, often helps him lead his walks. "She and Joel, her one-year-old brother, will never see the area the way I did. They'll never be able to fully understand what the area once was. People who come new to the area aren't going to understand, either."

On Saturday, though, this professor of Computer and Information Sciences at San Diego City College won't deliver a discourse. "I'll talk about the history, but mostly I'll let the area speak for itself as to where it's come from and what it may be moving toward."

— Jeanne Schinto

"Country Lanes of Carmel Valley" Saturday, February 9,

9:00-11:00 a.m.

Meet at the front entrance to Torrey Pines High School Northwest corner of Del Mar Heights Road and Torrey Ridge Drive,

one mile east of the Del Mar Heights exit off I-5

Free

Info: 858-755-1751

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