

Rat Watch

Anna Von Reitz



This is my fiftieth anniversary of Rat Watch. Every December for the past fifty years, I have stood my duty station.

I was fifteen when this began, and the subject was Zoning. The pundits of Jackson County had taken the bait in the form of a Federal Block Grant and were busy trying to "zone" every rock, tree, and fence post into three categories allowed by the federal land management scheme.

A property could be agricultural, residential, or commercial.

The problem was that our property didn't fit in any of these categories.

The parcel where our home was located was a piece of my Grandfather's much larger farm property, but in itself wasn't large enough to be termed "agricultural".

And as my Mother stoutly affirmed, we weren't "residents" on temporary assignment for the purpose of providing "essential government services", so it wasn't "residential" property, either.

God knows no commercial activity was involved.

So, we and our homestead slipped quietly through the cracks and as the members of the Jackson County Zoning Commission scratched their heads, my Mother scratched hers --- what was a "Zoning Commission" and who died and left them to rule as gods?

My Mother was never one to take being labeled lightly.

She knew that labels are intrinsically dangerous things, and that they are used for bad purposes.

Labels separate people into groups and groups can be pitted against each other; segregation can occur, discrimination can occur, all on the basis of a label like "residential" or "agricultural".

And whose business was it, what she chose to do with her land? Her grandfather didn't buy it with any labels attached. She was damned if any labels were applicable after the fact.

The whole idea of zoning was offensive in her mind, another example of government overreach, and a prime example of people sticking their noses in other people's business and abusing the mechanics of government to do the dirty work.

Now, bear in mind, we weren't running a junkyard or a pig farm or causing any "public nuisance" --- any battle was entirely theoretical. Our inoffensive and neatly kempt little house and fenced five acre yard was not the kind of property that raised any eyebrows.

It was just the principle of the thing, the invasiveness and the labeling and the government involvement that offended my Mother.

Despite her ire, and her unanswerable objections, the Zoning Commission continued its slow plod toward destruction ---and receipt of the block grant money attached to their progress.

I was a sophomore in High School with other things on my mind, but my Mother made me stop by the County Administrative Office every afternoon and quickly scan the bulletin board for meeting notices and agendas.

The District Attorney, whose office door was exactly opposite the bulletin board, took note of the strange young girl coming in every day and standing there reading the public notices and sheriff's department reports.

Ella Johnson cited for drunk and disorderly..... Fergus McClane cited for keeping wild animals in a pen....

Finally, one afternoon in November, he popped his balding head out of his office and asked what I was so interested in?

The answer, Zoning Commission Meetings, made his skinny eyebrows raise. Who knew that teenagers were interested in such topics?

He went back into his office without a whimper, though he cast a glance back over his shoulder, as if to mark me for later observation, and I continued my solitary daily watch.

Finally, there was action, on the 23rd of December, the day before Christmas Eve, a meeting of the Jackson County Zoning Commission was scheduled for two o'clock in the afternoon, a Wednesday.

I carried this news home to Mother. I was almost excited myself. Almost. "Hmmmff!" she sniffed, "Typical....."

"Typical of what?"

"Bureaucrats," Mother glanced at me and shook her head. "They always pull stuff at the last moment, just before Christmas. That's when they passed the Federal Reserve Act, you know."

No, I did not know. Nor, at that moment, did I care. Though it did strike me as strange that the meeting was scheduled for mid-afternoon. Most public meetings took place in the evenings to encourage attendance, a fact that I dutifully noted.

And sure enough, on that fateful day, the Jackson County Zoning Commission had the audacity to try to label our homestead "residential" property, only to run headlong into a small freight train.

"I am not a resident and my home is not residential property."

The debate, I am told, went on for three hours. The result was that the Jackson County Zoning Commission established a fourth category, "Miscellaneous", and our house was the first non-descript entry in it.

My Mother was proud as a dog with a new bone.

This was my introduction to Rat Watch and the nip-and-parry warfare of Man against Bureaucrat, which my Mother assured me, reached a crescendo every December.

It's as if the Dark Forces gather speed and try to rush all the rotten stuff through in the days just before Christmas, while everyone else is distracted by the holidays.

As she put it, "the rest of us" have to stay on our toes.

So far as I could see, it was just her keeping watch. Nobody else showed up for that Zoning Commission Meeting. The rest of Jackson County hurried on, enjoying the Christmas decorations and buying presents and planning Christmas dinners. They'd never know that the "Miscellaneous" category existed because of my Mother, and in the years to come, it would be the only refuge from Property Taxes in the entire system.

But I knew. And she knew. And every December, she kept watch. We still do our Public Duty. We still keep the Rat Watch in December, and increasingly, other Americans are taking up the Vocal Vigil, checking the local committee meetings and Congressional actions, ready to pounce.

"Well," my Mother would sputter, somewhat indignantly, "if we don't do it, who will?"

She had a point. So, I reluctantly took up my post beside her, and as the years went on, I realized that she was right. They really do try to push through no end of garbage in December.

Much later in life, as I was reading egregious Acts of Congress and nasty bills passed by State-of-State Legislatures around the country, I'd check the dates---- and sure enough, December, December, December.

So, this December, like every December, I and my Non-Party Affiliated friends will stand the watch again, as we do every year.

Our networks will be out, restlessly searching the airwaves and reading the electronic bulletin boards, going to meetings, issuing our Public Comments, passing on the news.

It isn't easy or fun, but like so much else in life, it has to be done.

Please think about the Rat Watchers engaged in their thankless task this December, think about their hours spent away from their families at meetings held at odd hours on dark afternoons and evenings, their hours spent writing public comment responses and alternate news blurbs.

It's because of these Watchmen (and Watchwomen) that so much of the evil has been kept in check or moderated.

Think of Granna girding up for this December's Rat Watch and not exactly celebrating fifty years on the job.

This year is likely to be one of the worst on record for bureaucratic mischief. We need more young people to wake up and join us and carry on, and we need your support in whatever ways and forms you can give it. Reports are already coming in from all over the country --- tax increases, resource grabs, vaccine "passports" and similar atrocities against the public interest.

While you are tying up ribbons and having another Hot Buttered Rum, you know what we'll be doing.

If you can, please consider a Special Donation to the only Government that protects you and your assets--- not only in December, but all year long.

Their yearly push is on, but so is our push back.

Our legal teams are busy developing the means for average people to defend their interests against the big corporations -- and take the corporations down.

Our banking teams are busy pushing through the bureaucratic red tape to make sure that relief finally reaches the people of this country --- not welfare, but money and exemptions you've been owed for generations.

Rat Watch involves a lot of Senior Citizens every year and many of them don't have any extra money to attend meetings, especially this time of year. It also involves students, who have even less to spare.

We have to car pool and ride buses, and increasingly, buy computers and computer services so that our people can attend teleconferenced public meetings--- and make sure that the public's voice is heard even in deep dark December.

If you can, please support this year's Rat Watch. Send your prayers and a contribution toward this special yearly effort to:

Anna Maria Riezinger
In care of: Box 520994
Big Lake, Alaska 99652

Our websites also have donate buttons you can use at: www.annavonreitz.com and www.TheAmericanStatesAssembly.net --- just send a message that its for "Rat Watch" and it will get where it needs to go.

See this article and over 3400 others on Anna's website here: www.annavonreitz.com

To support this work look for the Donate button on this website.