

John Briggs Responds

In late 2003, with my beautiful wife Carmen, we settled here in SCA as full time residents seeking only to "live the good life", and to enhance Carmen's cancer survivor recovery program. After all, we had spent a lifetime in the public eye and felt we had earned it.

It was last February when we accepted an invitation to meet ACE candidates who made us aware of strong differences of opinion existing in Sun City resulting in our trusting them with our vote, and returning to "living the good life". Then, after returning from a brief California visit to help Carmen, I was flattered with a request to consider being a Board candidate, where my legislative and business skills, I was told, could complement the skills of others with the governing of Sun City Anthem.

Never in my wildest dreams did I at any time anticipate I would be attacked by a person who was not there thirty years ago, and who wanted to re-cast a part of my life in a turbulently changing era. It seems this person desperately wanted his readers to judge me now on a subject, while ignoring the simple truth, that with the passage of over thirty years, America has changed--including me.

Frankly, I am astounded and saddened by an obvious smear by reciting events of the 1970-80's era, so as to leave the reader with the false impression that I am an "intolerant person" who should be shunned today. What the readers weren't presented with, because I wasn't asked to comment before publication, that the truth is many of the named gay's cited in the "Meet John Briggs" blog articles were then, or became later, friends and colleagues. It is well known that leaders of causes can vehemently disagree in public, but privately share many moments with their opponents talking about life, love, family, country and secret dreams. Frankly, if it wasn't that way, this country could not have survived.

It wasn't a secret that the pioneer "larger-than-life" gay leader Supervisor Harvey Milk, a magnetic personality, and I were friends. We didn't socialize, but before and after our vigorous debates, we laughed, talked, and became friends. I too mourned with others when his all too short life was ended when a madman, who called himself a "Christian", murdered him.

This same madman, on that same day, killed my friend, and former Senate colleague, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone, whose public admirers heavily attended San Francisco funeral services for him, which included my wife and me, to also show our respect for George, his family, and the people of San Francisco.

Another notably mentioned person was the NY Times best selling gay author/news reporter Randy Shilts. He first befriended me in Miami while I was campaigning with Anita Bryant. Randy's book, and movie, "And The Band Played On" recounted a much different America back in the 70-80's, where President Reagan and the country shamefully

neglected the AIDS epidemic causing the deaths of thousands that only ended when President Reagan spoke to his AIDS stricken friend, Rock Hudson, in 1987.

I served eight years in the California legislature and agreed 99% of the time with then Governor Reagan, and he was a good man. And, like President Reagan, and most of the country, I think differently now, and have put aside the 70's and 80's, and respectfully request others do as well and move on to the civil side of life.

My friend, Randy Shilts, died in 1994 of AIDS at the age of 42. He almost single-handedly changed America's attitude, along with mine, towards gays and AIDS. A story about Randy that I like to tell is he had a deep secret he made me promise to keep. He brought a picture of the two of us walking suspiciously close. He asked me to autograph it. So for posterity and good humor, I wrote "To Randy, With Love, Senator John V. Briggs".

So, going back in time some thirty years, what was it that took me to Miami that has made me "news" again in Sun City Anthem?

It began thirty years ago when Assemblyman Willie Brown, the very liberal Speaker of the California State Assembly from San Francisco, bragged he was in Miami, Florida to help beat down the citizen-led effort by "those church people" fighting to repeal an unpopular new law which stripped Miami churches of the right to determine who would teach their children.

With Anita Bryant leading the fight, which repealed the unwanted law, the citizens of Miami perceived it to be a threat to family values, their children, and an unwarranted departure from the American tradition of separation of church and state.

Upon, hearing from a Christian friend that Willie Brown was in Miami claiming "he was speaking for California", my evangelical upbringing propelled me, along with my wife Carmen, to fly to Miami to stand up with them in their fight for family values, and separation of church and state values.

I greatly admired Anita Bryant then, and now, as a hero who "put it all on the line" for her children, her church, and her family values to stand up and protest when she believed the government was wrong. We know the rest of the story...she won the battle, but later lost the war as the media "voted" to destroy her--and did.

Almost thirty years have now passed since that historic family values fight when Carmen and I (celebrating 56 years of marriage 12/28/07) not only stood for our principles, but fought for principles as we then saw them.

It wasn't the first of many struggles, some won and some lost, in my long political career to fight for principles that I believed in, and the people's right to be heard. One almost cost me my life, but I was saved by two very brave FBI Agents, one who had lived for over seven years "underground" to finally arrest, and convict, the five Prairie Fire

Weathermen--who were plotting to strap a bomb to "Senator Briggs' chest and blow me up"--as they put it. But, that is another story.

Frankly, like most born during the Great Depression, I found out quickly that "standing up and speaking up" was a matter of survival as times were tough, and living was hard in South Dakota. My greatest hero was my Mother, who raised her five children alone with NO government subsidies, took us to church regularly, and taught us to "stand up" for ourselves, our faith, family values, and always to respect, and help others.

So, it is strange indeed that thirty years later, a "cost" of honoring my Mother's teaching, to stand up and fight for family values and my principles, is now being a recipient of unwarranted bashing on beliefs then by an individual not interested in reporting how I feel about the issues in question now. Fortunately for me, the good people of Sun City Anthem will decide for themselves if I warrant their vote for the Board of Directors.

John V. Briggs

P.S. To respond to some of the other false blog statements:

- I DID retire as a CA Senator after fulfilling the required years of service in the CA Legislature, and I am receiving a well-earned CA pension for that service. At the time I retired, I had resigned my office in lieu of completing my full term for personal and family reasons. My replacement to the Senate was elected.
- I have been a full time Nevada resident, and it has been almost 12 years now since I registered not only my vehicles, but also I registered to vote as a proud, new Nevada resident. I have no idea why anyone would make false statements about such easily-verified data.
- Finally, I have not assaulted anyone, nor have I been accused of an assault. If someone should make such charges, you can be certain that I would vigorously defend my good name and reputation.

I sincerely hope that no resident has been deceived or influenced by the many false stories and twisted opinions posted about me during the past few months by a leading blogger. It is tragic that one of our residents would stoop to such low levels of hateful misconduct and dirty politics. At no time did the blogger attempt to approach me to find out the truth. He unilaterally published his false data without regard for the potential impacts. And, after learning the truth, he has not posted an apology and retraction.

SCA homeowners deserve **much** better. Fortunately, we have a number of superior sources of community information.