

## **Our Life at Rossmoor**

Shaoping Moss

December 20, 2018

Seeking a new life on the West Coast, Len and I left Amherst in western Massachusetts on July 1, 2012, and relocated to the Bay Area, California. We first rented a two-bedroom apartment in Sycamore Green Apartments, Concord, where we stayed for a year and half. Then after purchasing a co-op in Rossmoor retirement community, Walnut Creek, we moved into our new home at the end of 2013.

What attracted us to Rossmoor was its good reputation. It's a nationally recognized senior community, with approximately 6,700 co-ops, condominiums, single-family homes and a population of more than 9,600 people. The information on Rossmoor's website intrigued us, claiming it "a place of comfort and security, beauty and serenity, enjoyment and enrichment." As adventurers in both China and America we decided to take the last plunge in our life by settling into this new community.

This collection of selected letters was written after we resettled in Rossmoor. It expresses our contentment and illustrates some problems we encountered while living in this senior community. Reading it will give the reader a glimpse of our experience during the new chapter of our life.

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Rossmoor was founded in 1964, and 2014 was its 50th anniversary. The Golden Rain Foundation (GRF), the government of the community, planned to have a huge celebration of this event; they were soliciting residents' opinions about their life in Rossmoor and displayed their views in the Event Center. Satisfied and excited with our newfound life in this beautiful and stimulating environment Len and I came up with a list of 10 good things we enjoyed most in Rossmoor.

## **Ten Things We Love at Rossmoor**

Leonard and Shaoping Moss

June 3, 2014

We Love Rossmoor for its

- Senior residents coming from all over the country and the world with diversified cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and their friendly, open-minded attitude
- Political, religious and ethical freedom of practice and expression
- Park-like and zoo-like natural beauty ornamented with flowering bushes and shrubs and blooming trees; deer, wild turkeys and geese roaming around freely; the wide variety of birds nesting under the eaves
- Many rain-free months in a mild climate with cloudless blue sky and heart-warming sunshine
- Wonderful facilities, 200 self-organized clubs, rich activities – bus lines, a Fitness Center, Event Center, golf course, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, informative newspaper and TV station, movie theater, restaurant, and many other regular or customized services
- Diversified lecturers and performers from outside as well as by residents
- Safety of a gated entrance; nearby doctors, hospital, and shopping; mail delivered to front door
- Knowledgeable management teams overseeing the community effectively; active participation in management by residents; competent staff managing services, facilities and landscape efficiently
- Unique Chinese American club with its members over 350 strong (a delightful SURPRISE to us! Now the members have increased to over 400 in 2018.)

We especially enjoy our well-designed, well-located, convenient, sunny manor. Taken together, it was worth the great effort in uprooting ourselves from the East Coast and resettling into this comfortable senior community on the West Coast

The celebration of Rossmoor's 50th anniversary was a huge success. Many residents were very excited and happy about residing in this senior community, praising Rossmoor as a "paradise" on earth and "a cruise ship that never leaves the port." We were also

pleased with our six months' living in Rossmoor, feeling lucky that we had found this unique senior community in California. During this period we were busy with our writing projects and enjoying daily exercise. In addition, we both joined several clubs. I joined the Chinese American club, Table Tennis club, and Volunteer Exchange club, and even became the web master of the latter. Len joined the Table Tennis club and became a member of the Community Chorus, busy with their practices and performances. We were looking forward to many years' happy living in this beautiful environment.

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### **A Race Relation Incident**

Rossmoor publishes a 60-page-long community newspaper called "Rossmoor News." Coming out every Wednesday, it brings to every residence press releases, articles, columns, residents forum, club activities, religious events, movies, gym, pools, transportation, and many other things pertaining to Rossmoor. I especially like the Residents Forum section because it's a good avenue for residents to air their opinions on any issues concerning their life in Rossmoor. It's like a barometer reflecting the sentiments of the community.

After we lived in Rossmoor for a few months I began to notice some unpleasant things happening around us. On May 14, 2014 the Residents Forum carried a letter by George Ramas, a white man, "Don't Like It? Then Move Out." In the letter he attacked Mr. Zhou, a Chinese resident, asking him to pack and leave. The reason he wanted him to go was because Mr. Zhou wrote a letter "Low-income Rossmoor is an Illusion" in the previous issue of Rossmoor News. It made him think that Mr. Zhou only wanted wealthy people to live in Rossmoor. I was disturbed by Mr. Ramas's harsh words, sensing a strong racial undertone in between the lines.

So I asked Mr. Zhou to send me his original letter that aroused the white man's animosity. Then I solicited a board member of the CAAR (Chinese American Association of Rossmoor) for her attitude towards this incident. She told me that although she personally considered it an instance of racial discrimination, yet the CAAR Board didn't want to get involved because they were afraid that their intervention could stir up bad feelings among the white residents toward the Chinese since the demographics in the community are over 90% white. They claimed that the "objective of the Association is to socially promote

fellowship and fraternity among its members and friends;” therefore they would try to avoid as much as possible any controversial issues.

Futile to seek help from the CAAR association, I made up my mind to write a letter to the Rossmoor News, disputing the nasty view of the white man and defending the Chinese resident’s rights to live in Rossmoor. The newspaper published my letter two weeks later.

### **Comment to Letter Writer Was Distasteful**

Shaoping Moss

May 28, 2014

I am new to Rossmoor. After moving into this senior community for half a year I am amazed by what a congenial community Rossmoor is with people coming here from all over the country with such diversified cultural, economic and ethnic backgrounds.

However I am stunned to read Mr. Ramus’ letter “Don’t Like It? Then Move Out” on Residents Forum, May 14, in response to Mr. Jiayi Zhou’s writing that “Low-Income Rossmoor is an Illusion,” April 23. I feel the tone of Mr. Ramus’ remarks carries some negative implications.

I’ve read Mr. Zhou’s letter on “Low-Income Rossmoor is an Illusion.” I could not sense that he “thinks that only wealthy people should live in Rossmoor” as Mr. Ramus criticizes. Without knowing much about the history of Rossmoor and the background of the issue I don’t want to get into the argument. However I believe that Mr. Ramus has no right to ask Mr. Zhou to pack and leave just because he expressed his view on certain issues that Mr. Ramus dislikes. This kind of rude and uncivilized manner in handling different opinions is distasteful.

I think we should value any comments by Rossmoor residents that indicate their concerns about the community. Their willingness to express their opinions should be appreciated as a kind of community service. I sincerely wish that the Residents Forum continues to be a great way for the residents to air their opinions on any issues with rational arguments and persuasive analysis; but under no circumstances should it be used as a vehicle to conduct personal attacks.

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## **Another Race Relation Incident**

Rossmoor has a population of about 10,000 residents: most are whites; about 10% are Asian Americans—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc. But what seems odd was that within the community only a dozen or so are African Americans. Puzzled by the social demographics I asked a black lady in her 80s, “Why there are so few black people living in Rossmoor?” She replied, “It’s because of their lack of confidence to live in a white community.” Not fully convinced. Her answer left some doubts in my mind.

A few months after the incident of the white man’s attack another letter appeared in the Residents Forum. This time it’s a white lady named Irene Baroni, blaming a black woman, Jo Ann Lawrence, for promoting unhealthy race relations in the community because the latter raised a question about why no letters were published in Residents Forum responding to Ms. R., a black resident’s description of “uncomfortable moments” she and other residents of color had experienced at Rossmoor. The white lady demanded, “I respectfully request that Ms. Lawrence make an effort not to nurture, promote or introduce unhealthy race relations into Rossmoor.”

Shocked by her demanding and demeaning tone, I decided to look for Ms. R.’s original letter in the archives of the newspaper and found it in the issue of Nov. 25, 2014. In her letter she complained, “I walked the circle that is Golden Rain Road. I became aware that cars slowed down, and some even stopped as the drivers gawked at me. Those drivers appeared, to me, to be frightened! She also said that her co-occupant was even questioned at the Fitness Center by a white woman whether she had permission to use the pool.”

Her grievances made me feel puzzled why Ms. Baroni had no tolerance for those legitimate concerns. Then another letter came out in the newspaper. It was written by a white woman complaining about how her black friend was detained at the gate by the security guard because of her skin color. I believed those occasions indicated that racial prejudice certainly existed in Rossmoor. Therefore I wanted to challenge Ms. Baroni’s view in the Residents Forum. I exemplified my point of view with the concept of “microaggression” that racial discrimination can be manifested in either blatant or hidden ways in modern time, questioning her assumption that racial tension didn’t exist in Rossmoor .

## **Have an Open Dialogue About Race Relations in Rossmoor**

Shaoping Moss

Jan. 6, 2015

I would like to comment on Irene Baroni's remarks in the Dec. 8 Forum on Jo Ann Lawrence's letter of Nov. 25. Ms. Baroni asks Jo Ann not to "promote unhealthy race relations" in Rossmoor community. Rossmoor can be considered a "paradise" in many ways, but there is no guarantee that our community is entirely free from the racial discrimination and prejudice against people of color permeating American society.

America has had a long history of racial discrimination against people of color, so racism and bigotry against them cannot be eradicated overnight. It still exists in our daily life, manifested in many blatant or hidden ways, as Derald Wing Sue, Professor of Psychology and Education at Columbia University, pointed out in his book "Microaggressions in Everyday Life," in which he describes the covert form of racial discrimination in modern American society. Can we assume that Rossmoor is entirely free of this veiled/subtle way against people of color?

Since people of color have been persecuted and marginalized for so long they have a keen perception about both open and hidden racial occurrences, so we should adopt an open-minded attitude towards their views. The best way to maintain harmonious race relations in Rossmoor is to have an open dialog among the residents about those racial issues, in order to nurture a culture of "acceptance and tolerance" in our community. Therefore, I wholeheartedly support Ms. Lawrence's effort to work with "any and all who want to identify and improve understanding" among all Rossmoorians.

There were no immediate comments to my opinions in the community. Nevertheless, those race-related incidents made me sense the racial tension within the community—an underground current beneath the seemingly peaceful surface. I realized that after all Rossmoor shouldn't be viewed a "paradise" as many people held. For sure some residents have carried their life-long baggage with racial issues in them since the average age of the Rossmoor residents is 75. Like any community in the mainstream of the society Rossmoor is not immune from racial prejudice toward people of color, especially the

blacks. Now I began to see the wisdom in the old black lady's answer to my question: why so few black people live in Rossmoor. It's hard for them to fit in because they feel unwelcome. I also realize why the Chinese American Association didn't want to defend their member facing the white man's attack. It's because many Chinese Americans have carried the baggage of the discrimination and prejudice their forebears suffered when they came to America to join the Gold Rush, and then when they were exploited and pushed out after they helped build the cross-continent railroads and developed agriculture and manufacture in America. Those bad memories inflicted them with terrible pain, making them reluctant to get involved with any intangible racial issues. Therefore, unfortunately racial discrimination and prejudice against people of color, which are so pervasive in American society, do exist in an enlightened community like Rossmoor.

My conclusion was further evidenced in 2016 when the American General Election enthroned Donald Trump, a mad man with a mind carrying bigotry, racism, and xenophobia, as the President of the United States. After he took office cases of racial hatred and intolerance became rampant throughout the country, and Rossmoor was no exception. Several ominous incidents happened in the community. For example, a Jewish couple found a swastika painted on their patio; signs displayed by the Atheists and Agnostics Club was vandalized; a bumper sticker was removed from a resident's car by someone who disapproved of it.

Then the January 18, 2017 Rossmoor News published an article by Amal Moulik, an Indian American, in the Resident Column. In his article Mr. Moulik described three incidents of racial hatred happening to him subsequently: one occurred the day before the Election when he was at a highway exit a young white man on a pickup truck yelled at him, "Get out of my country, you f\*\*\*\*g terrorist," and spat at him, then drivers of surrounding cars sounded their horns and shouted "Right on, man." The second one happened the day after the Election: when he was walking in a Rossmoor parking lot a middle-aged white woman almost hit him with her car, and then said coldly, "We'll get you next time, nigger." The most recent one occurred when he was at the gas station near Rossmoor: an elderly white woman screamed at him, "Are you a terrorist?"

Angered and saddened by those acts of hate Mr. Moulik asked, "This is MY country by birthright and by choice. I have as much right to be here and call the United States home as all the immigrants who came here long before me." Then he raised a thought-

provoking question “What has happened to our great nation of immigrants, whose parents and grandparents were once greeted by those words:

Give me you tired, your poor  
You huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

Mr. Moulik’s courageous and eloquent letter stirred up quite an uproar in Rossmoor community. In the ensuing months many resident and clubs wrote letters in support of him by condemning acts of hate and intolerance toward people of color, non-Christian citizens and non-European immigrants and denouncing those who carried such acts among our own community.

One resident asked, “How can we as Americans treat a fellow, brown-skinned citizen with such ignorant contempt? Can we let people with hateful prejudices encouraged by our bigoted and egocentric president speak for the majority of us who are deeply patriotic Americans? No. I think not! We are a nation of immigrant citizens.” A fellow resident responded, “Without immigrants from many nation of the world, the United States would not exist or continue to be a beacon of freedom to all those our Statue of Liberty welcomes.”

Another resident pointed out, “This is a reflection of what has happened in our country on a much larger scale over the last few months. Hate crimes are on the rise. Bullying and name calling have become acceptable behavior by many Americans.” Then he questioned, “Do we really want to become an uncaring, heartless society of people who only respect those exactly like us?”

Eighteen Democrats of the Rossmoor board of directors wrote a collective response published by the Rossmoor News on Feb.1, “As Americans and Democrats, we are shocked and deeply saddened by our fellow Rossmoor resident and neighbor Amal Moulik. As Rossmoorians and Democrats, we pledge to be alert and to act upon any racist threats wherever we see or hear them. Equality for all regardless of race, sex, age, religion or national origin is the bedrock of our shared values and we will defend it whenever and wherever they threatened.”

Eight religious and civil rights organizations of Rossmoor also stood up against those poisonous acts. In their collective statement, they declared, “Recent events illustrate the need to stand against divisiveness, discrimination and deplorable actions and words. We in Rossmoor come from different locations, culture, religions and backgrounds, but we can, and need, to speak up as one community of courtesy and respect.” It also stated solemnly, “Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, gender-based and/or age-related discriminatory activities violate the safety and well-being of our community, and, as they demean any one of us, they demean us all.”

Even the CEO of Rossmoor wrote an extensive article in the Feb. 22 issue of Rossmoor News with his stand against bigotry, racism and prejudice in Rossmoor and his defense of the enormous values that immigrants had brought to their adopted country of the United States.

Clearly Mr. Moulik’s letter united the Rossmoor community. I was thrilled to see so much support for him pouring out in this incident. In contrast to my piece “Have an Open Dialogue About Race Relations in Rossmoor” (Jan. 6, 2015), which had elicited no responses at all, the intensity and number of the responses demonstrated that the senior Rossmoornians were not asleep at all; they were fully aware of what’s going on in the community and in the country. It shows that the 2016 General Election has awakened American people, arousing their political consciousness. Now the Rossmoor residents have begun to connect what happened in the nation with that of their own community. As the Diversity Consciousness Group of the Interfaith Council stated in their letter to the Rossmoor News, “We choose to see our neighbors with the eyes of our hearts and to embrace differences as benefits of living in this community.”

Now I became more appreciative of our fair-minded residents, who gave me hope that their high value of human rights and dignity will overcome any bigotry and hatred in our community. Even though I no longer believe Rossmoor is a “paradise,” yet I still consider it a sanctuary—a peaceful and quiet place to rest in our old age after decades of roaming around in China and America, seeking opportunities in our personal and professional life.

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## **Money Makes Louder Noise than Leaf Blowers!**

Routinely Len and I took a walk around the Rossmoor neighborhoods in the morning. We truly enjoyed the blooming trees, flowering bushes and shrubs; roaming deer, wild turkeys and geese under the blue sky. But sometimes we were disturbed by loud noises of leaf blowers used by the maintenance crews to clean leaves on the lawns and debris on the sidewalks.

A resident named Susan Clark was unhappy about this problem, and she wrote an article about the necessity to eliminate the use of leaf blowers in the Earth Matters section of the Rossmoor News, Oct. 21, 2015. In the essay she listed all the harm leaf blowers did to the environment and human health— spewing strong chemical pollutants (carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides and carcinogenic hydrocarbons) from the machines’ nozzles into the air; kicking up noxious mixture of airborne fine particles, which result in 9,000 premature deaths a year in California alone. The sound from one leaf blower measures over 70 decibels at 50 feet and can damage the operator’s ears, causing high blood pressure, headaches, loss of sleep, etc. For their hazardous harm to human health, the California EPA, the American Lung Association and the World Health Organizations condemn the use of the leaf blowers. As a result, hundreds of cities, towns and municipalities nationwide have banned or restricted leaf blowers.

I felt alarmed by Ms. Clark’s detailed description of the harmful effects of leaf blowers and wondered about why Rossmoor still allowed their wide use. So I expressed my concerns in a letter to the Rossmoor News, asking why shouldn’t Rossmoor ban their use.

### **Get Rid of Leaf Blowers in Rossmoor**

Shaoping Moss

Nov. 4, 2015

I do hate the deafening noise of the leaf blowers! But little did I know about their hazardous effects on human health and environment. Susan Clark’s article “Those Nasty Leaf Blowers” on Earth Matters, October 21 gave an enlightened analysis of those issues.

In the article Susan points out that the local governments have the responsibility to defend the citizens’ right to protect their physical and mental health and protect their right to have a quiet environment. So we Rossmoor residents should

speak up, urging the GRF administrators and various mutual boards to take this issue seriously, starting negotiations with the maintenance contractors to eliminate the use of leaf blowers in cleaning grounds while finding alternatives in cleaning sidewalks and driveways in Rossmoor.

If hundreds of California towns and cities have banned the leaf blowers why shouldn't Rossmoor—a senior community where so many elderly with cardio-pulmonary and allergy problems reside and so many older people walk and exercise outdoors?

After my letter was published quite a few residents followed suit, most echoing the same concerns while a few had different views. Those who were in favor argued that Leaf blowers were loud, but efficient; fewer workers were needed to clean leaves off lawns and debris off streets. If less efficient tools like rakes are used more maintenance crews would be needed to do the job. That would result in an increase of the monthly coupon (home owner fees). Obviously their main reasons to keep using leaf blowers had to do with finance. Most residents didn't want to shoulder that financial burden. Therefore, the outcome is that our complaints didn't change the status quo because money makes louder noise than leaf blowers.

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### **Rossmoor Is a Gated Community, but Burglary Still happens**

Rossmoor is a relatively safe community, enclosed by a long fence all way around the 2,000 acres of the land, leaving only one main entrance open for vehicles and pedestrians, and the GRF management has spent big money in hiring a security company to safeguard the gate and patrol the neighborhood. Nevertheless, now and then thieves still managed to break into homes and steal residents' possessions.

Believe it or not—some of the thieves were the relatives of Rossmoor residents. They are on the residents' permanent guest list, so they can come in and out of Rossmoor without being screened or questioned. A recent case occurred in March 2018. The son of a resident broke into multiple homes, stole two cars and crashed both of them. The suspect was apprehended and arrested. The incident was just one of several that happened in the last few years.

In January 20016 I expressed my opinion in a letter to Rossmoor News pertaining to a similar case. In the letter I strongly advocated, "In order to safeguard the security of our community, we must be cautious about the guests we bring in. In a democratic community, vigilance is the price we pay for security."

**Should the Resident Take Some Responsibilities for the Crime?**

Shaoping Moss

Jan. 27, 2016

I applaud the good detective work that our security staff did in capturing the thieves at Rossmoor, but some questions have been left in my mind after reading Cathy Tallyn's article "Arrest made in Rossmoor crime spree, suspects were guests of Rossmoor resident" on the front page of the January 20 Rossmoor News. In the article the writer quotes Dennis Bell, Rossmoor's Public Safety manger: "The thieves were able to get into Rossmoor because they were on a resident's guest list," but "Nobody in Rossmoor was arrested or implicated."

I've found Mr. Bell's explanations not convincing. As 25 thefts occurred within one month it means that the resident's guest frequented Rossmoor almost every day during that period. How could the resident have no knowledge about his/her guest's wrongdoings? There may be details that cannot be revealed yet, but I think the resident should take some responsibilities for the crime. In order to safeguard the security of our community, we must be cautious about the guests we bring in. In a democratic community, vigilance is the price we pay for security.

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**Traffic Fine**

Rossmoor is a dangerous place in term of traffic accidents. There are three main roads running through the Tice Valley where Rossmoor is located: Golden Rain Road, Tice Creek Road and Rossmoor Parkway. The speed limits are 25 mph, but some drivers drive much faster than that. Often an accident happened because a speedy car hit a pedestrian crossing the street. One of the reasons to the accidents is that many of the senior drivers have poor vision and lost their quick reflexes in emergency. Even though most of

Rossmoor residents are in their 70s and quite a few have reached 80s, 90s and even 100, but many of them don't want to give up driving, for fear of losing their physical independence and daily convenience.

One day my friend Hua came to me, devastated for getting a big speeding fine from the Walnut Creek police. She said "when I drove down the steep slope on the Golden Rain road a policeman stopped me, writing me a ticket for \$360. I was driving at 29 miles an hour. The fine was too high for just a few miles over the speed limit." Then she said stressfully, "You know I'm living on my late husband's social security and the fine would take half of that money away." Sorry to see her in this distraught state for fear of financial hardship I said, "Hua, Don't worry so much. I can go to court with you, asking the judge to show pity on you by reducing the fine down to a reasonable amount based on your income. Gladly accepting my offer, she insisted, "I want you to help me write a letter to the Rossmoor News to warn others about the hefty fine for speeding.

Out of sympathy for her situation I drafted a letter for her, but overlooked the risk that such a complaint might bring on us. When she circled the letter among her Chinese friends, asking their signature in support of her petition, none of them was willing to sign their name. It ended up with just our two names appearing on the published letter in the newspaper.

### **Big Traffic Fines Hurt Residents**

Shaoping Moss and Zhu Jianhua

Oct. 12, 2016

Recently, we have noticed that Walnut Creek police have been hiding in several concealed places near the main traffic roads in Rossmoor in an attempt to catch speeding drivers. The fine is steep and merciless. The caught driver can easily get a ticket for close to \$400 even if he/she is a first time offender who has gone only a few miles over the speed limit.

We understand that it's the police's strategy to solve the traffic problem in Rossmoor by giving out big fines. However, they should remember that many Rossmoor seniors live on social security income and a \$300 to \$400 fine can easily chew up a big chunk of their monthly income. Fines should be used as a warning, not as a punishment that causes hardship in their daily life. A special

tiered-fine system geared towards the seniors may be more reasonable: \$75 for the first offender, \$150 for the second time, and so on.

Moreover, besides issuing big fines, Walnut Creek police could do more for Rossmoor residents by patrolling neighborhoods. Their noticeable presence will definitely scare thieves and burglars, helping reduce crime incidents and making our community more secure.

Sure enough, our letter opened a hornet's nest, provoking a fiery response from the residents. People depicted their bad experiences in encountering inattentive drivers in Rossmoor, claiming that the fine should be even higher for speeding. I felt bad about my imprudent action in writing that unwise letter. This case taught me a lesson: Think carefully before making a jump. Never take foolish action against the public mood. Hua's Chinese friends might be wiser—keeping their heads down, never rocking the boat.

However I went to the court in Walnut Creek with Hua, serving as her English interpreter. Based on her low income the judge reduced the fine, asking her, instead, to do 30 hours' community service plus paying a registration fee of \$75. I felt relieved when Hua did get a break from the hefty fine.

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### **Health Issues with the Pools**

Rossmoor has three swimming pools. One of them is within walking distance from where I live, so I swim there almost every day for 9 months except the wintertime when it closes. Nestled in lush greenery at the foot of a hill, the Hillside pool is surrounded by beautiful palm trees and green meadows, with deer and flocks of turkeys roaming around freely. Enjoying and relaxing, I often immerse myself in the calm and warm water, intoxicated with contentment. This open-air pool is my Heaven in Rossmoor!

But that peaceful setting was disrupted during the summer of 2017 when the main pool was closed due to a major renovation of the Fitness Center. Now the Hillside Pool was crowded with swimmers, exercise classes, sunbathing residents and visiting children. I tried to avoid the crowd by swimming there in late afternoon when most of the people

went home. One day I was shocked when I watched several people in the exercise class getting into the pool with their everyday clothes and sneakers on. This unforgiving behavior was disgusting since their cloths and shoes could be contaminated with bacterial that would be transported into the pool easily. So I wrote a letter to the Rossmoor News to warn residents about the potential health-threatening issue; at the same time cc'ed a copy of my complaint to the Aquatic Committee and the Resident Service.

### **Shower Before Entering the Pools**

Shaoping Moss

August 9, 2017

As a frequent swimmer I've always followed the rule: Shower before entering the water. However, I'm alarmed to see that some swimmers getting into the Hillside pool without taking a shower; some people in the exercise classes even wearing clothes and sneakers inside the pool.

Those people may not realize what they brought into the water with their sweaty bodies and clothes. They may think that chlorine in the water will kill the bacteria and microorganisms. But things like sweat and urine can react with chlorine to create toxic compounds known disinfection by-products, or DPBs. The potential health issues include asthma, respiratory and skin issues. Also, fecal matter (poop) can find its way into water by washing off people's bodies when they swim. This can be a more serious health risk, since fecal matter has germs like cryptosporidium that can cause gastrointestinal illness.

Our lifeguards are diligently keeping the pool clean with chlorine and weekly cleaning. But while chlorine kills most germs within minutes, it doesn't kill them instantly. When we swim we are potentially sharing germs because we share water and sometimes we swallow it.

Therefore I ask all swimmers and people in the classes: Do your part to keep the pool clean. Practice good hygiene. Before getting into the water, use the bathroom and at least rinse off in the shower to remove any sweat, urine, poop, or excess personal care products. We need to keep our pools as sanitary as possible for public health reasons.

When the letter came out in the Rossmoor News friends and residents responded positively. One person told me, “Good for you, speaking up for sanitation in the pool. I must say I’ve been afraid to go into it for quite some while.” But what surprised me was the lukewarm response from the director of the Resident Service. He said, “The rule is very difficult to monitor and enforce. This requires an honor system,” and “posting of signs is not an effective means to communicate the rule to participants.” It sounded like he was totally giving up before even trying. I didn’t like his passive attitude.

Meanwhile a friend passed me an article, “Sanitary Pool Requires Proper Behavior” published by the Wall street Journal. It talked about the problem we were facing. Since the Rossmoor administration was not interested in educating the residents about the issue I decided to take the matter in my own hand. I wrote two more letters subsequently to the Rossmoor News and also cc’ed a copy to the director of the Resident Services and the chairman of the Aquatic Committee. In one of the letters I publicized the findings of the Wall Street Journal, helping residents to understand the consequence of the matter; in the other I emphasized the importance of advising the children to follow the same rule.

### **Keep the Pools Hygienic and Clean**

Shaoping Moss

August 9, 2017

Last week I wrote a piece about the sanitary conditions in the swimming pools at Rossmoor, asking our residents to follow the rule: Shower before entering the water. Meanwhile I heard several people complaining about skin rashes, eye irritation and yeast infection after using our pools. Recently a friend passed me an article, "Sanitary Pool Requires Proper Behavior" published by the Wall street Journal, July 22-23 2017.

It reported that an artificial antiseptic found in 31 pools indicates that people are peeing in the pools. What causes real concern is that urine combines with chlorine to create byproducts that irritate the eyes, skins and respiratory system, and the spent chlorine is not longer available to kill disease-causing germs. Furthermore, feces that cling to the body are the primary source of germs in pools or hot tubs. “At any time, adults have about 0.14 grams of poop on their bottoms

and children have as much as 10 grams of it.” Feces can contain bacteria, viruses and parasites like E. coli, norovirus and giardia that lead to outbreak of many illnesses.

At a senior community like Rossmoor older people are more prone to diseases. Therefore we should be more vigilant about the sanitary conditions in the pools. The suggested solution is “Shower for about one minute before swimming to remove personal-care products and traces of feces.” Also, adults should urge their children to wash their bodies clean before letting them enter the pool. It’s up to every one of us to keep our pools hygienic and clean.

### **Shower Before Swimming**

Shaoping Moss

August 23, 2017

During the last two weeks I wrote two pieces about the sanitary conditions in the swimming pools, and urged the residents to change their behavior by showering before swimming. This time I’ll emphasize the importance of asking the children to follow the rule.

Rossmoor has a policy to open the Hillside pool to the grandchildren of the residents 7 days a week, 2 or 3 hours a day. Meanwhile we should be aware that this policy has also opened the door to many bacteria and microorganisms children may bring into the pool water. As the article of the Wall street Journal, July 22-23, 2017, describes, “At any time, adults have about 0.14 grams of poop on their bottoms and children have as much as 10 grams of it.” So if there are 100 children using the pool in one week about 2 pounds of fecal matter may be washed off their bodies into the pool. This is not to mention how much urine they may release into the water each day.

Therefore, I hope that Rossmoor residents will educate their grandchildren on the importance of keeping a sanitary pool, and urge them to use the bathroom and wash their bottom clean before entering the water. Also, a visible sign should be set up next to the pool, reminding people of the rule. If our life guides feel uncomfortable to remind the residents directly, at least they ought to ask the

children to do so, to protect the health of the children and that of the residents.

Surprisingly at the end of my third letter the editor added a note, stating “*There is no evidence that the water in GRF pools has ever caused health issues for any residents.*” However after my letter was published one resident mailed me a letter, telling me how much she appreciated the information I presented to the public and now she understood what caused her health problem. At the same time, the reaction from the director of the Resident Relations was very defensive. In his email he repeated the editor’s statement, and stressed that the pools were well maintained by the staff by following strict procedures. He argued that the publicity of the health issue might create a situation where people were giving up swimming “because they are afraid of the water based on unsubstantiated reports.”

The director’s defensive and self-protective attitude; especially his referring the Wall street Journal’s report as “unsubstantiated” infuriated me and impelled me to dispute his ridiculous views right away,

Wall street Journal is a reputable journal, and I wouldn’t call their published report based on scientific research “unsubstantiated.” Since it reported that an artificial chemical found in 31 pools indicates that people are peeing in the pools, how can we say it’s not true with the situation in our pools? No matter how well you maintain the chemical feed systems you cannot eliminate the by-products created by the reaction between sweat and urine with chlorine, which creates potential health issues like asthma, respiratory and skin problems. Fecal matter washed off people’s bodies can cause gastrointestinal illness because even though chlorine kills most germs within minutes, it doesn’t kill them instantly. Chemical feed systems have their limits.

It’s true that “people who use our pools can and do have health related issues.” They don’t link the two is because they either have no knowledge of it or fear that raising the issue will cause themselves trouble. For example, the woman with yeast infection twice didn’t know that fungus in the pool could cause it until her doctor pointed it out. So she just quit swimming as the result. I developed skin problems and didn’t make the link until I learned the fact that it could be caused by the disinfection by-products, and my husband, with lung problems,

didn't know the byproducts could make his breathing condition worse.

The reality that many of the swimmers don't take a shower before swimming has been a long overlooked problem at Rossmoor. What I want to address in my letters is to present the residents with the scientific facts, to urge them to change their behavior and to educate their grandchildren on the importance of keeping a sanitary pool; I have no intention to question whether the pool water is now safe and how you maintain the sanitation of the Rossmoor pools. There is no need to defend how well you and your staff maintain the pools, which I already acknowledged in my first letter ("Our lifeguards are diligently keeping the pool clean with chlorine and weekly cleaning").

But there is also no need to wait until enough people get sick to provide proof that a health problem exists. My own skin problem and a few others I know should show that some residents have had health problems after using the pools. I do hope that you and the Aquatic Committee will focus on how to educate the residents about the importance of following the rule—Shower before using the pools and hot tub and reinforcing it when the Tice Valley pool and hot tub reopen. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Afterward I circled our argumentative correspondence among a few friends, and one person commented, "It's my impression that your emails are quite effective and well written." Then she added, "His responses are what I suppose someone in his position would consider "prudent" to make. The last thing he wants to do is to do anything that would diminish his empire. He wants to be able to say that he is doing everything possible to minimize health risks and that the pools are safe. But on the other hand, taking overt action, such as talking about it, let alone enforcing rules against urinating/feces or even entering the pool sweaty and unwashed, is apt to sensitize users to the point of scaring them away... and thereby reducing his standing in the pecking order."

Nevertheless, no sooner were my three letters were published than a farcical incident occurred at the Hillside pool—a resident discharged diarrhea in the water and walked away from it without reporting the accident. The pool has to be closed for two days for emergency cleaning. I was really mad about this disaster and shot out my fourth letter to the Rossmoor News. This time the editor rejected it, claiming, "This is an embarrassing and unfortunate incident. What you are doing is embarrassing the person even more by writ-

ing a letter.” I wasn’t convinced by her reprimand. How could I embarrass an anonymous person since who never reported the case? So I want to make it public in this piece of writing.

### **Following the Rules in the Pools to Protect Public Health**

(Unpublished)

Shaoping Moss

August 21, 2017

During the last few weeks I wrote three letters to the Rossmoor News, presenting the residents with the scientific facts about the sanitary conditions in the swimming pools, urging everyone to change their behavior by showering before swimming, and to educate their grandchildren to follow the same rule.

But no sooner had I done that than a fecal accident happened in the Hillside pool on Saturday, 8/18/2018. Someone discharged diarrhea in the water and walked away from it without reporting the accident. The pool had to be closed, and lots of chlorine was poured into the pool to sanitize the water. It’s hard to image how much toxic disinfection by-products were created from this incident that could harm our health.

That person having the diarrhea accident violated another rule—People with diarrhea currently and in the previous two weeks are not allowed to enter the pool water. The reality that many people don’t follow the rules in using the pools and hot tub has been a long overlooked problem at Rossmoor.

We must understand that those rules are established for the purpose of protecting the public health. I hope that the aquatic staff and the Aquatic Committee will continue to educate the residents about the importance of following the rules and reinforce them when the Tice Valley pool and hot tub reopen. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

At the same time my friend, Isabel Leonard, wrote to me “I just read the most recent Rossmoor News. The editor’s note to your letter has already been answered in your previous letter about dumping in more chlorine. Seems to me the authorities are just “covering their asses” if you’ll excuse the expression. I think a second voice should take over here and I’m planning to write my own letter.”

I replied, “You are much more aware of the risk of swimming at our polluted pools. I

wrote four letters to the Rossmoor News, two were published, one is coming out today and the last one was rejected. (They didn't want me to embarrass the offender.) I feel like a voice in the wilderness—the residents don't care and administrators are not supportive. I got into an argument with the director of the Resident Services. He said that the article published by the Wall Street Journal is "unsubstantial" and there is no proof that our pools have caused any health issues in the residents." I also told her, "If not because of my needs for loosening the old scare tissues from my surgery I really want to quit swimming. You can read the rejected letter I sent to the Rossmoor News to understand how mad I'm at the irresponsible behavior of some residents. That's the drawback to live with some old fools in a senior community."

The friend responded later, "I'm horrified at the diarrhea incident—I hadn't heard about it. I suspect the real reason that letter wasn't printed is that if everyone read it, no one would swim in the pools any more, and the pools are a big marketing point for Rossmoor. I imagine that many potential buyers are attracted by the pools and the golf course even though they wouldn't actually swim or golf in them." She also emphasized, "I certainly agree with you about 'those old fools.'

Her letter came out the following week on the Residents' Forum, emphasizing the bad reaction between chlorine and water. "Chlorine itself is bad for us," she stressed. "It's a poison. It reacts with water in and out of the body to form hydrochloric acid and hypochlorous acid, both of which are extremely poisonous."

### **Shower Before Swimming**

Isabel Leonard

August 30, 2017

I am grateful to Shaoping Moss for reminding residents to take a cleansing shower before entering any of our pools. At the gym I went to before I moved into Rossmoor, a member seen entering the pool bone-dry would be jumped on immediately. The first time I took a dip at the Hillside pool four years ago, I observed two people getting in totally dry, and I asked the lifeguard if she planned to remind them about showering. She looked at me as if I'd just dropped in from Mars.

As Ms. Moss pointed out, lack of swimmer hygiene means that more chemicals must be poured in. Chlorine is bad for us. It's a poison. It passes through the

skin to form hydrochloric acid and hypochlorous acid, both of which are extremely poisonous. This point was not addressed in the editor's note to Ms. Moss's letter on August 23. The editor says "*There is no evidence that the water in GRF pools has ever caused health issues for any residents.*" Well, there wouldn't be. No one keels over from chlorine poisoning as they exit the swimming pool. But its cumulative effect, combined with other environmental contaminants, is potentially health-threatening.

For this reason, chlorine in pools must be minimized, and accordingly showering rules must be politely but firmly enforced by lifeguards and swimmers. It would also help to have signs at the pools stating the community health benefits of showering...

The Rossmoor community remained silent about our letters except one resident who insisted on the Residents Forum that chlorine is not poisonous. Isabel and I decided not to counter her argument since she missed the main point, which I explained clearly in my first letter that "things like sweat and urine can react with chlorine to create toxic compounds known disinfection by-products, or DPBs, which can cause many health problems like asthma, respiratory, skin issues, etc."

At least the Aquatic Committee acknowledged our concerns in the Rossmoor News, advising the residents to follow the rule. Nevertheless, still very few residents took showers before getting into the pools and hot tub. Their indifferent attitudes made me realize that our efforts in making public know about the health hazards in the pools made no difference because we not only ran against the doing-nothing attitude of the administration but also faced the reality that in a senior community many old folks don't want to inconvenience themselves in their daily routines. Taking a shower before swimming seemed to cause them too much trouble, no matter whether they should do it to protect the public health or their own. They just don't want to be bothered. Therefore I had to give up the battle. I concluded in my message to Ms. Leonard, "Unfortunately, I don't think our letters will change the current situation—the residents don't care and the administration is not supportive. I just have to change my own habit—not using the hot tub and the exercise pool any more to minimize contact with the harmful toxic compounds."

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## Locker Room Issues

At the beginning of 2018 Rossmoor residents staged a protest against the administration about the poor results of the remodeled locker rooms, which was part of a \$10 million renovation of the Tice Creek Fitness Center—a colossal project that lasted over a year with several delays of opening. Eventually the locker rooms were opened for the swimmers on Dec. 18, 2017 while the rest of the facility was still under construction.

As soon as it opened I went for a swim and used the women's locker room. To my dismay I was appalled to find out that the remolded facility was terrible. Although the new locker room was much bigger and brighter in comparison to the old one, yet it was poorly designed: low quality partition boards were installed between the shower stalls, cheap plastic curtains were hanging on the shower doors, tiled floor was cold and slippery without mats, and very fewer lockers were added. Moreover, the women's locker room was located in the far corner of the building, guarded by two heavy doors without an automatic door opener, difficult for elderly and handicapped residents to access. Everyone was shocked by the disastrous results.

An old lady in her 70s asked, "How could a handicapped person get into the room?" "No way. It's hard to pull the door open even for a able-bodied person," I replied.

"You see," a resident complained, pointing at the new lockers, "Oddly, a bench is installed into the frame of the lockers. When I sat on it to change my cloth I blocked the doors of the surrounding lockers. What a ridiculous design it is!"

Another woman added her worries, "The floor is so slippery that I almost slipped on it and fell."

This was the worst locker room renovation I have ever seen," one lifeguard on-duty echoed with our concerns.

Back home from the swimming pool I sat in front of my computer and wrote a letter to the Rossmoor News, alerting the community about the locker room issues. Meanwhile I cc'd the letter to the executive director of the administration (CEO), saying "It's hard to believe that after years' planning and discussion we have ended up with such a lousy product. I suggest that some improvements be made soon, such as putting mats on the

slippery floor to prevent falling, which can cause liability issues.” My letter came out on the Readers Forum in the Rossmoor News the following week.

### **Disappointed in Fitness Center Locker Rooms**

Shaoping Moss

January 3, 2018

The new locker rooms in the Fitness Center were finally opened on December 18. I felt disappointed after trying it. I would say part of the renovation is a downgrading from the old one—inferior design with cheap materials. The tiled walls between the showers are replaced with partition boards made with poor materials, and the solid shower doors were changed to cheap plastic curtains. All the big hangers disappeared and only a few tiny hooks are attached to the boards. Inside the showers there is no place to put your toiletries except dropping them on the floor.

I understand that the main purpose of expanding this space was to add more showers and lockers to meet the growing needs of our community. However, now on the women’s side, although the space seems doubled, yet only one more shower is added, and the numbers of lockers are fewer than before, with a big empty space left in the middle of the room, with not enough benches.

I suggest for immediate improvement: attach big hooks to the boards, put long benches in the room, and install more lockers; for the near future, more showers should be installed, and solid partition boards used when the inferior ones are rotted away.

Now I only hope the rest of the renovation project in the Fitness Center will be more successful after it’s completed in January. We Rossmoor residents have high expectations for such an expensive undertaking after \$10 million have been poured into it.

Next day when I used the locker room again I noticed a one-centimeter wide crack crossing the entire floor. Several people I consulted all believed it either a design defect or a mistake of poor workmanship. So I wrote to the Rossmoor News again to expose the problem. But I was told that the crack was left intentionally as a drain, still I was not convinced. Even if it functioned as a drain it should be aesthetically designed, not appear un-

finished and ugly. At least it showed the poor workmanship. All well, I didn't want to instigate controversial, so I asked the editor to cancel my letter. However I include the letter here to let the readers judge.

### **The New Locker Rooms Are a Rip-off of Rossmoor!**

(Unpublished)

Shaoping Moss

January 10, 2018

In my last letter to the Rossmoor News I criticized the renovation of the locker rooms with inferior design and poor material. Now I have discovered yet another problem: a one-centimeter-wide crack on the tiled floor across the entire room. Is it used for drainage or is it a demonstration of poor workmanship?

I've used many gymnasiums before, but this is the first time I've seen a long crack being left in the middle of the locker room. If it is used for drainage at least it should be connected to a pipe. But peeking into it you can see the underlying structure. Over time, I'm afraid, water will leak into it, mold will grow and the foundation will rot. Eventually it will threaten the foundation of the whole building.

It's hard to believe that after waiting so long with several delays we have ended up with such a faulty product. It's like spending a huge amount of money to downgrade one's house. Now with so many residents worrying about whether they can afford to live in Rossmoor because of the continuing increase of their monthly coupons and the special assessments, we should be careful with every dollar spent, and try to create a state-of-art facility that warrants the high cost of renovation.

I believe that so many issues including the poor workmanship prove that the remodeled locker rooms are an obvious rip-off. We should ask where the money went. I suggest that an effort be made to locate the responsibility; and effective solution be found to fix those problems.

After my first letter was published I received an email from a friend who commented "the Locker room issues made the **front page**! And, there is another editorial supporting you!"

Then she added, “While many people have not voiced their concerns, **many** are unhappy . . . not only a few. It’s a very unhappy situation . . .”

However, the CEO responded to my letters negatively and defensively. “I’m sorry that you are ‘outraged’ and feel this project is a ‘rip-off’ as tremendous efforts have been made to incorporate resident ideas while keeping a close eye on cost, functionality and efficiency.” Then he snapped at me, “A feature that is important to you may not be as important to other users and vice versa.”

Offended by his dismissive and arrogant attitude; especially the way he put my words “outraged” and “rip-off” in quotation marks, and deemed my complaint an “assertion,” I pushed back, disputing his defense point by point:

Thanks for your response to my letter of January 3. You should know that I’m not the only one who is “outraged” about the poor results of the renovation of the new locker rooms. A sizable number of residents have already complained to you, director of Resident Services, and GRF Board by phone, email and in person. Their complaints and the resident letters in Rossmoor News should further validate my “assertion.”

Almost every one I met in the women’s locker room was disappointed with the results, complaining about fewer lockers, not enough showers, no place to sit, no mat on the floor to prevent falling, no handicapped access. Even the lifeguards and cleaning crew considered it the worst renovation of a locker room they have ever seen. One woman told me, “I called the Resident Services Director the first day I used the locker room and complained to him that just adding one more shower didn’t solve the problem in my aquatic class. There were 23 women and 2 men in the class. I either had to get out sooner or wait for a long time for a shower after the class. Also, there are only 22 lockers that are not even enough for our class. The general opinion: inferior and cheap.”

Since its opening I have noticed the bad consequences: not enough lockers to use when a class is in session, and residents standing in line for a shower even before the Fitness Center fully opens, no handicap push door button; the temporary plastic curtains keep dropping off the hooks (hopefully their permanent replacement will stay secure and last longer), the shower heads were broken (I

picked up one on the floor); the paper dispenser and water extractor machine often stopped working. In one instance I witnessed two workers replacing the doors of the two bathrooms next to the pool, and two days later the locks broke.

In my experience the real efficiency of a good locker room is to have enough showers and lockers; the changing stations are not useful since not many people use them; in their place more showers should have been installed. What troubled me most is that we lost an opportunity to add more showers. Later on it may be easier to add more lockers, benches, hooks and other small things, but it will need another costly renovation to install more showers because it involves basic construction.

I'm not sure that leaving a crack in the middle of the room is the best design solution for drainage and for easy maneuvers by a handicapped person. I'll leave that for experts in construction techniques to judge. But I do know that to make a space friendly and accessible the first thing to do is to install a push button automatic door, so a handicapped person can come in easily. Unfortunately, we didn't do that in the new locker room. Some handicapped residents have already encountered difficulty in entering the room.

In your defense you seemed to put all the blame on the residents: "residents had expressed interest in curtains," "Advisory Committee provided input into the design," "Residents indicated that lockers in the old locker room were rarely used." As we know it's important to seek users' input for a project, especially for such a costly undertaking. However, attributing to them the basic renovation needs is not productive or practical. Most of the residents expressed their opinions with too little knowledge of a modern/state-of-art locker room. It is always up to the project team to make the final decision on design, material selection and all the necessary details, based on the community needs, extensive research, and expert knowledge.

A major renovation project like ours needs thorough planning and careful execution every step along the way by a dedicated project team, which we were lacking. For example, how difficult could it be to estimate the right number of showers and lockers just based on the number of students in the aquatic class, or the sign-up sheets that indicates the number of users during the peak time? Then the

missing floor mats (still not arrived yet), and the new ordering of durable curtains at the expense of poor ones could be cited. These details should be thought out at the early planning phase and orders be placed long before the locker room reopened. I question: what role did the Rossmoor project team, especially the project manager, play in the planning process and its execution?

With sufficient funding from the membership transfer fees there should be no excuse for installing so few showers and lockers, and providing no handicapped access; using low-quality materials like cheap partition boards, shower heads, paper dispenser, door locks, and especially poorly designed lockers. The cost for repair and replacement will offset any savings; to add more showers needs another costly renovation. Consequently, there is no guarantee that the future expenditure will not affect the monthly coupon. I want to ask: did the decision to install so few showers and lockers, no handicapped access, and choose low-quality materials come from the residents' preference and the Advisory Committee's recommendation, or instead from cutting corners by the contractor? Who made these absurd decisions? With all the demonstrated problems I consider the cheaply remodeled locker rooms are a "rip-off" of Rossmoor.

I strongly believe that we need to create a state-of-art facility to attract the younger generation of retirees who demand a high quality facility; meanwhile accommodate the needs of the older Rossmoor residents with mobility and dexterity issues. To come up with a balanced solution demands hard work by the Rossmoor administration. Just visit a local gym like the YMCA in Pleasant Hill, and you'll discover that it has a cutting edge, comfortable locker room for the users, even without as many financial resources as we have in Rossmoor.

Since you'll reevaluate certain features of the new facility in any case, why not put a suggestion box next to the sign-up sheet now, seeking residents' input for further improvements? You can also conduct a general survey to assess the residents' satisfaction with the Tice Valley Fitness Center once it reopens, which will demonstrate how acceptable the project is.

Sadly, with millions of dollars spent in a costly undertaking we have squandered a golden opportunity to create state-of-art locker rooms, but ended up with

a low-grade facility. I petition that you and the GRF Board will investigate the case, locate responsibility and give Rossmoor residents a satisfying answer.

### **Residents' Protest**

Marty Beck, a resident, called me after the Rossmoor News published my first letter. She said, "I'm glad I called you today—someone at the pool told me a person had written about the locker rooms, so when I read that section I just felt like I had to call you. People who think the way we do are in the minority, yes. But, we are not alone. Reading your letter in the paper helped me so much to feel like I wasn't alone, either." Then I had a long conversation with Ms. Beck over the phone. She told me that she had also sent a letter to the CEO; we seemed to hit it off immediately even though we had never met. She had the kindred-spirit, the spark I had longed for—a rare find in Rossmoor. I was so happy to find an ally in this fight.

She sent me a copy of her original letter to the CEO via email, in which she described what a good locker room for a senior community should look like from the perspective of an expert (She used to be a physical education teacher and had used many locker rooms.). Marty's detailed analysis of the new locker rooms was thorough and to the point. She explained eloquently what a good locker room should provide for the seniors. I was very impressed, praising her, "You wrote an excellent letter; much detailed and much better than mine. I would be interested in knowing how the CEO defends himself against all the issues you raised. Please send your letter to all the members of the GRF Board and shorten it to 250 words for the Rossmoor News." I was sure that her letter would definitely inform the community about the locker rooms problems well. I include it here:

A locker room in a retirement community needs to be:

Safe

Handicapped accessible

Functional

Convenient

Private

Warm

Comfortable

As one approaches the women's newly renovated locker room, one cannot help but notice it is located the furthest possible distance from the current entrance. This will remain so even when the fitness center is open. The men's locker-room is located in front of the exercise pool and just inside what will be the new fitness center entrance. It is surrounded on all sides by insulated walls. The women's facility is adjacent to the glass double doors and windows. In fact, the rinse station and all the showers are located along the northerly outside wall. It has been in the 30's and low 40's every morning since Tice Creek locker-rooms opened.

(A point of interest: women outnumber men in the daily pool use anywhere from 4:1 to 7+:1, depending on the hour. This on-going ratio, is supported by the daily sign-in sheets and pool personnel)

One enters Tice Creek women's locker room by walking through the rinse station area to the door (no handicap button) to the locker room. There is nothing to prevent the cold air from coming into the locker room each time the door is opened. When the door is open, there is a DIRECT sight line from the pool deck to the showers! This direct sight line is the result of the showers being only slightly offset from the entering door. The cold air is swept through the doorway when open and under the door when closed.

The handicapped showers are the furthest from the door to the locker room. Only two of the six showers have two outside hooks and none of the non-handicapped has more than one safety bar. The showers are open to the ceiling and the adjoining sides are over a foot off the ground. One can see the legs of others showering, as well as having some water from their shower flow into yours. The showers afford neither sense of privacy nor warmth. The entire locker room is one open space where the air is constantly circulating both above and below.

After showering, one must walk across an inevitably wet tiled floor to a curtained changing area that has one hook and a slatted, sharp-edged teak bench. This bench is neither safe nor comfortable. In fact, it is painful to sit on it. The open, unmated floor of the changing room gets wet and it becomes difficult to maneuver.

The entire locker room floor is tiled. While these are non-slip tiles, most feel a sense of wariness. There are no mats anywhere and water is everywhere. One must literally walk from the showers, (in the sight line of the pool deck were the door opened), around a low wall and all the way to the opposite wall to put one's suit in the spinner. The location of the suit spinner is furthest away from the handicapped showers. It's very location invites water on the floors.

The lockers themselves have benches built into them, in **front** of the lockers so one sits with her back to the locker she is using. In order to change after showering, one would have to pull her things out of the locker and place them on the bench beside her (thus taking up bench space for other residents) or keep getting up and down, turning around and retrieving items from the locker. The bench itself is hard, sharp-edged and extends two inches beyond the "cubbies" that are built in below. The "cubbies" extend the length of the locker unit. The bench is too high for anyone shorter than 5'6" to have her feet reach the ground. The bench is so long that one must lean at an angle to access any of the seven top lockers and anyone shorter than 5'8" or so would be unable to reach the hooks inside.

There is no seating of any kind along the two long white counters that have mirrors and face one another. There is exactly one hair dryer. The slight distortion in the mirrors and the "infinity" effect from them facing one another can be disorienting.

The lighting throughout is fluorescent and harsh. Already the heater doesn't work always, the paper towel dispenser doesn't work, and the shower curtain aim hooks keep popping off. There is a big, open unused space that serves no purpose whatsoever.

The baby got thrown out with the bath water here. Del Valle locker room was small, but it accommodated the needs of the community it served. There were private, warm showers that were enclosed on three sides and had two safety bars. A changing area was adjoined to the shower, with two hooks on the wall, another on the door and a solid bench to sit on. Even from the furthest shower, the suit spinner was just steps away. There were three private dressing rooms for those who required more time, with hooks on the wall and on the door that had

openings at top and bottom, assuring privacy and allowing ventilation. There were padded benches in the changing rooms and again outside in the one of three locker areas, where six padded stools sat in a cube, facing the lockers, which were close enough to reach into. Your feet were dry because there were mats and very little water, since one could totally dry off before leaving the shower area. It was always quiet and warm and there were distinct areas for each use—entryway, countered-mirror, toilets, showers, and changing rooms. Every distinct section of Del Valle went from floor to ceiling, creating the warm and functionality needed. There was an area to hang up wet raincoats and place umbrellas, molded-plastic chairs in front of the single-mirrored counter that had two hair dryers and sat under the skylights. There were mats everywhere and the handicapped shower was the very nearest shower. The entrance from the fitness center included a double-door, baffled space that kept out noise and cold air.

The old Del Valle women's locker room fit all the necessary requirements: Safety, functionality, convenience, privacy, comfort and accessibility.

How difficult would it have been to take what worked and made it even better? Tice Creek is bigger, but miles from better. There is no greater number of showers. Tice Creek women's locker room meets none of requirements—it is not safe, it is not functional, it is not convenient, it is not private, it is not comfortable, it is not completely handicap-accessible.

I truly do not understand the thought process that led to the Tice Creek women's locker room result. I sincerely look forward to hearing any thoughts you might have.

Rossmoor News published her shortened letter "Issues with the Lockers" that focused on the poor design of the problematic lockers, and was distributed to the community together with another letter of mine.

## **Issues with the Lockers**

Marty Beck

January 17, 2018

Sadly, there are several flaws in the design of our “newly-renovated” women’s locker room at the Tice Creek Fitness Center and pools, but I will stick to one in particular: the lockers themselves. I was a physical education teacher for over thirty years, teaching both junior and senior high school. I was a coach of varsity sports for over a decade and an athlete in junior high, high school and college, I feel myself somewhat of an expert.

I have seen many, many locker rooms and not a single one had a bench installed into the locker unit itself, with said bench facing outward with one’s back to the very locker being used. Not one. Do you put things on the bench, blocking others’ way and perhaps getting your things dripped on, or do you keep getting up and down, turning around and retrieving your things?

An 18-inch deep, sharp-edged bench means one has to lean in, braced with one hand, on tiptoes, to hang things up in the top lockers. The 33-inch deep ‘cubbies’ sit below the bench, an inch off the tiled floor. These factors lead to potential accidents through their sheer lack of function.

So, my question is “why”? No matter the process, there are many steps along the way to a decision such as this. The buck always stops somewhere, with someone. Who is the person taking “credit” for this?

## **Inferior Design and Cheap Materials**

Shaoping Moss

January 17, 2018

Since the opening of the new locker room on 12/18/2017, I have noticed the consequences of inferior design and cheap materials: no handicap push door button, not enough lockers to use when a class is in session, and residents standing in line for a shower even before the Fitness Center fully opens. The temporary plastic curtains keep dropping off the hooks (hopefully their permanent replacement will stay secure and last longer), the shower heads fall off from the

base (I picked up one on the floor); the paper dispenser and water extractor machine often malfunction. I witnessed workers replacing the two bathroom doors next to the pool, and two days later the locks broke.

With funding from the membership transfer fees there should be no excuse for installing only 22 lockers and 1 additional shower, not providing handicapped access, and using low-quality materials like cheap partition boards, shower heads, paper dispenser, door locks, water extractor, and especially poorly designed lockers. The cost for repair and replacement will offset any savings; to add more showers needs another costly renovation. There is no guarantee that the future expenditure will not affect the monthly coupon.

With all the demonstrated problems, I deplore the appalling results of the cheaply remodeled locker room. I question: did the decision to install so few showers and lockers, provide no handicapped access, and choose low-quality materials come from the residents' preference and the Advisory Committee's recommendation, or instead from cutting corners by the contractor? Who made these absurd decisions?

More residents supported our open letters by airing their criticisms in the Rossmoor News. The headlines included "Many Concerns About Locker Room," "Why no Automatic Doors?" "Most Women Are Critical of New Locker Rooms," "A List of What the Locker rooms Need."

One lady tersely praised my comments: "Shaoping Moss' letter in the January 3 Residents' Forum is spot on," and "The Fitness Center locker rooms are definitely not state-of-the-art. More like the "art-of-delusion." A gentleman made some sharp remarks, "I agree 100% with the comments made by Shaoping Moss," and "I find it incredible that one can spend millions of dollars on a project and end up with something worse than what was there in the first place.

Another resident raised the accessibility issue, questioning, "Why aren't there automatic doors leading to the locker rooms?" "This is a senior community, not a 24-Hour Fitness where the average age is 20 to 40. Our average age is 75." Then she insisted, "Automatic doors should be in the \$10 million budget. They are not a luxury but a necessity. Our safety is of utmost importance?" Another one questioned, "Who is the person taking

‘credits’ for this?” demanding, “The people responsible for this project should apologize to the community for wasting their money and then resign!”

More residents complained directly to the administrators or brought in their petitions signed by others. A friend of mine commented on the situation, “Wow! This is amazing. It looks like very many residents have very strong feelings on this issue. How detailed are their letters, how thorough their critiques! You are really part of a movement now. There will be many letters in the paper and it will be a hot topic for some time to come.”

But not every resident liked our protest. A close friend of mine asked me, “What are you trying to achieve? You think they are going to rebuild everything?” “That GRF is incompetent I have known for a long time, and I try to ignore it and not let it spoil my days. Do what you have to do, but I think it is a little too late for all of this.” So I explained to her about my motivation for the fight, “I want to achieve two things in my protest: first I want to express my anger at their squandering a good opportunity to create a first-rate facility; second I want to let residents know how irresponsible, incompetent and possibly corrupt the Rossmoor administration was in managing this project.” I also said, “I don’t intend to change anything big. It’s too late. But I think that our letters and protest may be able to force them to make some small changes, like adding more lockers, benches and other things sooner.”

### **Response from the Rossmoor Administration**

The uproar of the residents put the Rossmoor administration on defense. It started with a feature story in the Rossmoor News by the managing editor who described how bright and spacious the new locker rooms looked like with some photos; then followed by an interview with the project manager and the architect on Chanel 28 (a locale TV station for Rossmoor). While the former managed hard to defend himself in running the project the latter tried to impress the audience with his incredible credentials in designing gyms. At the same time the Rossmoor News released a series of reports by the CEO to address the locker rooms issues. In his report the CEO insisted that the new locker rooms are a “state-of-the-art,” claiming that they had collected many inputs from the residents about the design, repeating that it’s unnecessary to put mats on the floor since non-skid tiles were used, and maintaining that it’s the restrictions of the building codes that prohibited more shower to be added. He went on with all sorts of explanations and excuses to down play the problems in order to save face.

Conversely the administration's defensive reaction did not quench the fire, but drew more criticisms from the residents. One woman argued against the editor's statement, "I was pretty shocked to read Managing Editor's article stating 'most comments about the new locker rooms have been positive.'" "Since reopening," she remarked, "I have attended six water aerobics classes used the women's locker room. I've talked with about 30 other women about it. Here are some of comments I repeatedly heard that were critical about much of the layout, fixtures and lack of recognition for senior women's needs and safety..."

Another resident challenged the CEO's assumptions, "I appreciate administration's attempt to provide information and quickly respond to some of the complaints. However, it's clear that mistakes were made with the structure, the design and materials used and I believe that acknowledgement of that would be in order."

Meanwhile the CEO responded my rebuttal to his previous defensive email by suggesting a face-to-face meeting with him and the Resident Services director. I consulted Marty about his request and both of us felt that it's useless to have a dialog with those smooth talkers. They often behaved like the bosses we had often encountered at workplace, using their power to intimidate and silent us with a lot of empty rhetoric. For that matter I politely declined his invitation, saying, "since our assessments of the renovation results are sharply different, it would not be productive for us to meet in person. I'll continue to express my concerns and suggestions for improvement in writing." Meanwhile I suggested, "a resident meeting be held after the re-opening of the Fitness Center; it will be more effective for you to address their concerns collectively." Moreover, I confronted him by saying, "the feature story published in the January 10 Rossmoor News claimed that 'most of the comments about the new locker rooms have been positive.' The Rossmoor community would like to see a list of positive comments by the residents and reports of interviews with the residents." He never responded to my request.

A friend suggested that I should get in touch with Carl Brown, a GRF Board member, to discuss the locker rooms issues. I followed his advice and invited Mr. Brown to my home. A man in his 70s Mr. Brown had developed his career in the IT industry, working as a programmer and a manager. He impressed me as an experienced and honest person. I hoped he would play an important role in straightening out the problems.

In our conversation I gave him my view of the issues and presented him with a stack of photos of the new locker rooms: the attached bench to the lockers, the falling board from the frame of the lockers, the slippery floors covered with suds, the wrong location of the water extractors, etc. Then I raised a question whether any self-dealing was involved in the project, and what's the relationship between the GRF Board and the Rossmoor administration—who was in charge? He said that self-dealing was unlikely since the Board scrutinized the process closely, but he admitted that although it's the GRF Board that ought to make the final decisions on important matters, very often the CEO wanted to run the show. Finally he promised me that when the Fitness Center was completed he would suggest to the Board that a town style meeting be held to let the residents evaluate the project and suggest improvements.

A couple of months later when the renovation of Tice Creek Fitness Center was completely finished the GRF Board decided to throw a huge party to the community in celebrating its grand opening. Guests were invited to the event, speeches given in praising its success, a lot of food offered to the attendees. But amid the celebrating cheers nothing mentioned about having a town hall meeting to discuss the problems and no words were uttered for any resolutions for the locker rooms.

Therefore Marty and I decided to write more letters to the Rossmoor News to push for solutions. In her letter Marty reminded the community that we still had issues with the locker rooms; in my letter I summarized the key issues and suggested some solutions. This time I addressed the gender inequality— an important issue that had been raised by several residents in their previous complaints. Once again, I cc'd my letter to the CEO. Our letters came out in the newspaper one day before the grand opening of the Tice Valley Fitness Center.

### **Locker Room Still Has Issues**

Marty Beck

February 14, 2018

The Fitness Center is beautiful. It seems a great deal of thought, both of design and function, and a great deal of money went into the renovation.

Meanwhile, it has been six weeks since the women who use the locker room after swimming have requested: mats in the changing rooms (floors are always

wet): grab bars in the changing rooms) each toilet stall has two grab bars, the handicapped has three and yet there is not a single grab bar in the changing rooms); mats to the suit spinner in the women's locker room (always wet); an additional grab bars in the showers; selves in the showers for personal items; automated doors into locker room (Fitness Center and pool deck doors are automated).

Let's hope on Feb. 15 we all have something to celebrate. Or is that too much to ask?

### **Solutions for the Women's Locker Room**

Shaoping Moss

February 14, 2018

We are celebrating the new Fitness Center, but problems with the remodeled locker rooms persist, and I offer some solutions.

#### **Safety issues**

We're told that the curtains used at the shower stalls are there for safety reasons. Why not install doors with openings at top and bottom without latches? This would assure safety and also privacy. How about installing safety bars on both sides of the showers and moving the water extractor close to the showers, so we don't have to walk on the slippery floor with water-dripping swimming suits in order to reach it?

#### **Cheap materials**

How about getting a warranty from the contractor to replace the cheap partition boards and offset the expenditure for their replacement? And return the strange lockers, teak benches and tiny hooks, then use the refunds to get some decent ones.

#### **Gender inequality**

As a number of residents pointed out, over 2/3 of Rossmoor residents are women; daily women swimmers far outnumber men, but the number of showers in the two locker rooms remains the same, with 1/3 more lockers for the men. Even though the men's locker room is only a few feet from both pools the women's is

tucked away in the most inconvenient corner, guarded by two heavy doors, with no handicapped access. These facts indicate a disregard for the women. Although it shouldn't be hard to add more lockers in the women's, to add more showers and change locations require a major renovation. Meanwhile the women have to bear the consequences.

As usual the CEO disputed my opinions in his responding email, "The women's locker room is nearly 50% larger than the men's locker room which is equivalent to a 60/40 women/men split. The number of showers and toilets is dictated by the Building Code." That's baloney! His self-righteous defense didn't make any sense. What's the use to have a big room without adequate lockers and convenient access? It's hard to believe that the building code was cut in stone. I was doubtful that they even bothered to negotiate any changes with the Walnut Creek town administration.

Despite the Rossmoor administration's colossal efforts in defending their action, a number of residents refused to accept their excuses and continued their protest. One day in March I joined Marty and two other residents in bringing our petitions to the Aquatic Committee monthly meeting. The meeting procedure dictated that each resident was given three minutes' presentation. When the first resident stood up to speak about the locker rooms issues the committee chairman immediately silenced her, claiming that the Aquatic Committee was not responsible for handling any problems regarding to the locker rooms, except the pools. But when the resident pointed out that it's the CEO who asked us to come to the meeting the CEO sat there silently without acknowledging the fact. The resident was so upset; she left the room promptly, but I stayed. I wanted to witness the unfolding drama.

Shockingly I heard the CEO lied to the committee. "I never asked them to come here," he said in a soft tone. "We can't satisfy everything they demanded," added the Resident Services director. Then and there my confidence in the Rossmoor management was flattened to zero. I felt disgusted to witness the CEO lying to the committee bald-facedly. When my turn came up I didn't want to talk more about the same issues after watching how the other residents were disparaged. So I brought up the issue of residents' not taking shower before using the pools and hot tub. Sensing my topic didn't raise much interests from the committee members I left the meeting quickly.

Back home, still feeling disenchanted by what I had experienced at the meeting I asked Marty to send me the CEO's original email that directed us to the meeting. With the

proof in hand I called Geri Pyle, Chairwoman of the GRF Board. “The CEO manipulated the residents at the Aquatic Committee meeting today.” I complained. “He told us to bring our complaints to the committee, but he didn’t inform the committee chair about this. Instead he denied the fact that he had asked us to be there. This kind of manipulative behavior shouldn’t be tolerated,” I protested angrily. “Actually I was at the meeting and witnessed what had happened,” Ms. Pyle acknowledged it. “I’m glad that you witnessed how the CEO was lying,” I said. “I’m going to forward his email to you as proof. I hope the Board will do something about it.” I had no idea how Ms. Pyle handled this incident, but I did hope the Board ought to teach him a lesson.

### **Final Results**

Ultimately Rossmoor residents won the battle. It came as a surprise since I missed the announcement on the May 2, 2018 Rossmoor News, and only discovered it a month later. It stated that at the April monthly meeting the GRF Board unanimously approved the funding for major changes in the locker rooms, including:

- Remove one entry door to the women’s locker room, install automatic opener and add privacy screen at a cost of \$7,854.
- Add more lockers in both the men’s and women’s locker rooms. Additionally, a bench that is not attached will be added in front of the lockers. The cost is \$19,278.
- Relocate the swimsuit water extractor in the women’s locker room. The cost is \$6,809.
- Add additional floor mats in both locker rooms at a cost of \$8,500.

I immediately notified Marty about the good news excitedly, “We’ve won the battle! This good news shows that the residents’ protest has taken effects.” “We should credit the GRF Board for reaching the unanimous approval for fulfilling the residents’ requests despite of the resistance of the administration.” In her responding email Marty revealed me the truth:

What you don’t know is Jan Howard and I attended all subsequent meetings of the Aquatic and Fitness Advisory Boards after the one you attended, along with the GRF Board meetings, including the final one you referred to. We made our three-minute speeches at all of the meetings. We also met privately with the CEO and the Director of Resident Services for an hour. It was Jan who made

the compelling argument for the automatic door and suit spinner. I think I made an equally compelling argument for the bench pads and mats in the changing rooms. Jan and I were the only locker rooms advocates who came to all the meetings and repeated and repeated the needs of the swimmers. The fact there was money in the budget helped immensely and the GRF Board made the intelligent choice! ”

Her explanation made me realize that without Marty and Jan’s determination those big changes might not happen. With great respect I sent her my appreciation and admirations for their persistent efforts:

Wow! I admire you and Ms. Howard for your perseverance. Now I know the truth—without your determined efforts those big changes may not happen. Believe me you two deserve a lot of credits. Please tell Jan how much I appreciate the great fight both of you had carried. I remember that the managing editor of the Rossmoor News attached a note to her last letter, stating, “According to the CEO, Ms. Howard has written 15 emails about the locker rooms to staff since November. Every one of them has been reviewed, researched and responded to in a timely manner,” hinting that she had complained too much and the CEO had done his best to respond. It would intimidate most people to give up the fight, but you two charged on.

It looks like that the Rossmoor News has functioned as an in-house mouth organ to serve the administration well. It just carried on what the administrators’ words at their face value without engaging any investigation. I’m surprised that it has published all the residents’ complaining letter about the locker rooms so far. Down deep I despise those administrators who have no guts to admit any mistakes. They have even used excuses like “as with any new building, a great deal has been learned once the building was in use. Based on usage, a number of adjustments have been made” to explain those changes.

That’s bullshit! Things like the location of the swimsuit water extractor, the needs for the automatic door and floor mates, and the right number of lockers should be determined at the planning phase of the project, not after it was completed. Some of the \$42,401 expense could have been avoided or minimized if more careful planning was conducted at the beginning. Thank God! Rossmoor

has the GRF Board and intelligent residents like you and Jan, who are able to force those incompetent and irresponsible administrators to correct some of their mistakes.

I only hope that they will learn a lesson from this incident, and not repeat the mistakes in the future renovation projects.

Marty replied, "Thank you for your words. Even the CEO and the director of the Resident Service wrote Jan and me to say our "persistence" paid off! It was a thankless task, but we were determined to carry on. Considering that the initial response five months ago was "no" to everything, I consider this all a huge victory and one deserved!"

I wrote the Rossmoor News one more letter, praising the GRF Board's good decision. After I circulated it among friends one person remarked, "Excellent letter! Beautifully written;" another commented, "This is a very well-written and thoughtful letter and I hope the GRF board will take it to heart. I'm not so sure however that they will 'learn a lesson,' but, it is a very nice acknowledgement of their efforts now, and, also to the residents of Rossmoor! Thank you so much for spearheading all of this!"

The Rossmoor News published my last letter on June 6, 2018, which eventually brought the case to a closure. As Marty stated, "The women's locker room design will forever be wrong, but at least it will be safer!" I was glad that I initiated the protest and our efforts won the final victory that was acknowledged by the Rossmoor residents.

### **A Good Resolution to the Locker Room Issues**

Shaoping Moss

June 6, 2018

Recently the GRF Board unanimously approved the funding for some major changes in the locker rooms, which includes installing an automatic door opener and a privacy screen, and relocating the swimsuit water extractor in the women's locker room; adding more lockers and additional floor mats, plus a bench that is not attached to the lockers, at a total cost of \$42,441.

In my opinion some of the costly expense could have been avoided or minimized if more careful planning had been done at the beginning of the Fitness

Center renovation. Thus we should learn a lesson from this incident to prevent such avoidable mistakes in other renovation projects, especially when we remodel the Hillside pool facility.

Let's applaud the GRF Board for making the right decision for the benefit of the residents. Meanwhile a big thanks should go to those residents who wrote letters to the Rossmoor News to express their concerns, who brought their complaints to the attention of the administrators, and who persistently attended the meetings of the GRF board and the Aquatic and Fitness Advisory Committees to make their pleas. I'm proud of our Rossmoor residents who were determined to make our facilities safer and better. Now I have more confidence in the governing model of Rossmoor, which is run by the residents for the residents.

Afterward I wrote a thank-you note to Ms. Pyle, who had just finished her term as the President of the GRF Board, praising her highly, "I like your speech at the GRF Board meeting. In your speech you used the phrase "for residents" many times, which set the tone for the fundamental principles of the GRF Board. It inspired me to write a letter to the Rossmoor News about the good resolution to the locker room issues. Thank you for a job well done." I was grateful that Ms. Pyle and all other Board members had stood up on the locker room issues to safeguard the interests of the Rossmoor residents.

### **Governance at Rossmoor**

Rossmoor is a retirement community developed 50 years ago by the original developer Ross Cortese, who invented this unique concept of retirement and created Rossmoor Corporation in the late 1950s. He envisioned a country-club-like community that would be in economic reach for the average retirees. First called "Leisure World," the first such community opened in Seal Beach, California in the early 60s, subsequently six more similar places opened nationwide, including Rossmoor in Walnut Creek, California.

Through the locker room incident I have learned a great deal about the governance of Rossmoor, and begun to understand what a unique governing model Rossmoor has adopted—Let senior residents select their representatives to manage the community for their own benefits. Rossmoor is created as a non-profit organization, governed by the Golden Rain Foundation, or GRF, which is composed the members elected by the residents in several subdivisions within Rossmoor. Each of the Board members serves as the

president for a few years, providing leadership. Collectively, the Board designed a General Plan—a vision document and a governance guide. The current Plan is divided up into 13 topics that each has a goal, including the environment/sustainability, open space/ landscaping, finance, facilities, transportation, security, wellness, social recreational programs and amenities, communication, technology, governance and housing and the Mutuals. The General Plan guides the Board, committees, staff, Mutuals and residents in running every function of Rossmoor. The Board also hires a CEO, who then employs staff and directs all of the maintenance operations and any capital improvements. The Board's task is to supervise the administration to ensure the foundation's objectives are carried out.

Under the GRF, Rossmoor is further divided into 18 homeowners' associations, called "Mutuals," which are California not-for-profit corporations and are operated by a board of directors, consisting of elected residents. They set rules and regulations based on the California Corporation Code, which apply to all the residents within the Mutuals, and they ensure the rules and regulations are carried out. Both the GRF Board and Mutual meetings include a residents' forum for questions, suggestions or complaints.

Many Rossmoor residents volunteer to serve on the GRF and Mutual boards, and another 40 more residents serve on half dozens of committees: Aquatics, Audit, Finance, Fitness, Golf and Technology. Those fellow residents contribute their time and energy unselfishly and tirelessly to the management of the community with their expertise and leadership skills. Rossmoor has benefited a great deal from their dedicated services and accomplishments. For example, David Smith, a retired attorney and a previous President of the GRF Board, helped establish the membership fee for buying a unit in Rossmoor, which allows the community to have continuous financial recourse in keeping itself as a first-class place to live. He also started the Rossmoor Fund to assist those residents who run into temporary financial problems to keep living in Rossmoor. We are fortunate to be well served by these volunteers.

Nevertheless as good as Rossmoor can be it's not a perfect place. The locker room incident reveals that the Rossmoor governance model has some potential deficiency—One of the challenges is that residents must elect responsible representatives to form a capable Board. Then the Board must hire an experienced CEO to organize a team of competent administrators and staff to manage the organization effectively and efficiently for the benefits of the residents. Therefore it's crucial that the Board have the intelligence, ability and backbone to supervise the management team well.

In reflection, what trouble me most in the locker rooms incident are the irresponsible behaviors of the Rossmoor administration and their lack of empathy for the senior residents. I often wonder why those people bother to work here in the first place? The answer must be for the easy money. The 2018 annual salary for the CEO amounted to \$255,000 plus bonus. And the salaries for two other senior administrators were over \$200,000. It's hard to believe. For such poor results of the locker rooms renovation and his unapologetic defense the CEO will still receive nearly \$31,000 increase of his 2019 salary, which includes 3.2% pay raise, a 5% market/merit adjustment and a \$10,000 performance award. He alone will get 1/6 of the total salary and benefits increase (\$180,000) for over 200 Rossmoor employees. For such a high compensation in a non-profit organization these well-paid managers ought to do an excellent job. In fact they only wanted the credits for the successful parts of the renovation project, but shun the problematic part like the locker rooms. What a shame!

Are their skill sets that vital? How fair is it that the rewards always go to the top of the management—the few who work with their mouths and let what is left trickle down to the majority of the employees who work with their hands? I believe many residents would be happy to see those incompetent and irresponsible managers being replaced by honest and responsible people who are compassionate for the residents in a senior community.

However, despite of the problems, comparing Rossmoor to the Echo Hill community we used to live in Amherst, Massachusetts I can see the huge difference in the governance and management. We once lived in a rental apartment in the Echo Hill, Amherst for almost ten years, but rarely saw any repairs and fixes done. A neighbor, who owned a condo, complained, "I wrote a letter to the management when I moved in, asking them to fix the wall of the podium; after 12 years they still haven't done anything." It turned out that a for-profit company that only collected homeowners' fees, but neglected upkeep and maintenance, managed the properties. Eventually things became so bad—the building walls started crumbling and the road surface cracking; finally they assigned a huge special assessment to the homeowners to pay for the repairs (and some owners might pass it on to the renters.)

In contrast, in Rossmoor the buildings of condos and co-ops are systematically maintained and roads routinely paved; landscapes are kept methodically. When something

goes wrong inside the living quarters the residents can call the maintenance office and they will send over a worker to fix it promptly. Even though I deplore those incompetent and irresponsible managers, I admire the landscapers, the bus drivers and the maintenance crews, who work diligently in providing good services to the residents, keeping the place orderly and running every function of Rossmoor smoothly.

As I told Ms. Pyle, the former president of the GRF Board, “No matter what problems we have in Rossmoor this place is still better than any one run by a for-profit management because Rossmoor is mostly controlled by the residents through the Board.” Because of the hard work of the GRF Board, the staff and residents, Rossmoor lives up to its reputation—One of the top retirement communities in the United States. We are happy to have a permanent home here, spending the rest of our life with seniors from all over the country and the world.