

Jeanne Farrens, Skandia Country Club

Nearly four years ago I retired from the LA Unified School District after teaching for 20 years. It was a moment I actually thought would never come. Even with the retirement benefits I would receive, living single in the valley in L.A. in a house still with a mortgage, I thought I'd never be able to afford retirement. I really wanted to. I'd already worked beyond retirement age, and I really wanted to be able to spend more time with my little granddaughter and her newborn little brother who lived in Fullerton with their father and mother, my daughter. Then something that seemed like a miracle happened. My daughter called me one day and said she'd been looking for someplace nearer her where I might be able to live. And she found something unexpected. A mobile home community near the beach. I spent my adolescence in Del Mar and she knew how much I loved the ocean. But a mobile home? When I was growing up, there was a name for people who lived in mobile homes. They were called "trailer trash."

But Skandia was certainly not that. I was amazed from the moment I first entered the park. It was an entire community of lovely manufactured homes. And when my daughter, Megan, and I walked into what would become my new home, we fell in love with it. The seller wasn't ready to move yet, which was good because I hadn't even put my house up for sale. And when we went to the office to talk to the manager, she told us that the park was family owned and the family trust guaranteed that it would always remain in the family. And the good news was that the rent on the land lease had only increased \$35 a year for as long as the manager could remember, which meant I could actually plan on my expenses. With the sale of my home in the valley, and the promise of reasonable rent increases, I knew I could afford to buy in the park.

The next six months were crazy, with my resignation, and then discovering that the owner of the mobile home had decided she in fact didn't want to wait, forcing me to make an offer even before my home was sold, her deciding she couldn't wait and then again, miraculously, my escrow closing on the very same day the owner was refusing my offer – it was obviously meant to be.

For the next two years I lived a dream life of retirement. The best part was I got to be grandma Gigi, watching my grandkids nearly everyday. Everyone in the park got to know and love my grandson and through him they got to know me. For a long time I was known as Nolan's grandma.

Then two years ago, everything changed. The grandchildren of the original owners, the trust notwithstanding, sold the park to a conglomerate, and from that moment on, my dream changed into a nightmare. None of us had been told of the sale, and by the time we found out, it was too late to do anything about it. A month after Kort and Scott bought Skandia, the land lease went from an average of \$1500 – to \$2195 for new tenants. And for those of us in the park, our rents were immediately raised \$75 a month, and then \$75 more the next year and the next. New buyers must now pay \$2400 and must show three times the amount of income to qualify. Our park is a senior park. What senior on a fixed income makes \$7200 a month. With my retirement benefits, I don't even make that. And along with the increase in rent came a devaluation of our homes. For every \$100 increase, our homes' value decreased by \$10,000. But that's all part of the egregious plan of these conglomerates which now have purchased 7 of the 17 mobile home parks in HB. To raise rents so high no seniors can afford it, forcing them to sell – or in several cases, to abandon their homes when they go into foreclosure or can't be sold. And when enough have gone, to rent their homes, and eventually tear down the park and turn it into condos.

Today, my dream of retirement is dead. With the rent increase, along with my mortgage, utilities and taxes, I am now paying nearly 90% of my income toward housing costs alone. I, a retired educator, a USC graduate and Yale alumna, even with my benefits, now have to work two jobs to make ends meet. And the dream of my retirement – the reason I moved to Skandia – to be able to spend time with my grandchildren – to be Grandma Gigi for the rest of my life. – That's gone. I don't watch Nolan anymore. I don't have time. And if the rent keeps rising, I may soon not be able to afford to live in my home anymore. And I don't know where I'll go. Please, please help me and other resident mobile homeowners – I implore you please support rent stabilization by supporting Assembly Bill 1035. Please.