

Reflections of a Great Mentor on a Young Man

-By Eddie Hard

My first encounter with Joe Patitucci came in 1986 while he and many other founding CCNA members were canvassing the neighborhoods to establish a neighborhood preservation area or NPA. He came to my home with petitions in hand urging with heartfelt concern for my mom and grandma to sign the petition for establishing an NPA. My mom and grandma understanding the need gladly signed the petition.

My family initially made ties to the Patitucci's when Joe's brother Jack went to work for my great grandfather, James Dickson at his masonry company in Sacramento. Subsequently, Joe met Drew Dickson; James's brother who was an exquisite woodworker and the two instantly found they had artistic design and practice in common.

Joe has had the most profound influence on me outside of anyone else in my family. After meeting Joe at 12 years of age while he was working hard to establish the NPA, I was exposed to several of the many talents of this great man. My grandma purchased 200 redwood trees from Joe, which he had purchased from a nursery in the Napa Valley. This was my first gardening experience with Joe. These redwood trees now stand tall and strong.

Joe's great desire to work in the garden, teach everyone he met, and his great ability to understand the dynamic nature of community problems made him a great mentor for me. I worked at Joe and Lucille's six-acre ranch for several summers after that first encounter. In those few summers that I helped Joe with his labor of love, immersing himself in his farm and fruit stand, I became a stronger man. Joe taught me how to plant vegetables crops, what the best varieties were, how best to prune fruit and nut trees. These good ethics I now pass along to those willing to listen.

I think Joe helped me the most by learning to have a good work ethic and to be a good community man. Joe taught me to respect the money I earned while working with him during the summers and the Christmas season at the tree lot. I respected Joe and he respected me, in fact enough to amend the CCNA bylaws to let me be elected on the Board of Directors at age 16 instead of the stated 18 years of age.

Joe was the first to give me insight into the political nature of land use planning in Carmichael and Sacramento County. A most valuable lesson I will forever keep close to my heart and in mind. Joe was most certainly a man who surfaces in our society once in a great while. I always took away very important lessons every time I met with Joe. He will always be the most influential mentor, friend and teacher I will ever know.