

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Want to rile the masses? Talk about...

After serving on the county board and observing our city council, there is clearly one public debate that riles the citizens of our fair county more than any other. Is it taxes? Nope. Crime? Not really. Street and road repair? Nada. Community development. 'Fraid not.

Now what COULD it possibly be?

It is the subject of dogs. Or sometimes cats — people's pets. Bring up the issue of establishing or increasing dog tag fees and registration and the city council chambers are filled at the next available opportunity. And after all the subjects I've written about which have angered readers, this one will probably be the death of me.

I could never have pets as a child because my mother had asthma and hay fever and was allergic to cats and dogs. As an adult with children, I had several dogs and cats as pets which I dearly loved, but I don't just love animals indiscriminately. In fact, I'm afraid of those I don't know. It only makes sense. And people who grow up in rural communities or on farms know the difference between animals and humans. Some people don't.

Once a big dog jumped up on me when I entered a friend's house, and as they assured me the dog wouldn't hurt me, his claws were tearing down my legs and it was definitely hurting me. When I later took off my slacks I had sore red marks on my legs which lasted for weeks.

A neighbor had a little dachshund which, because it was so close to the ground, had to jump up to bite people, including my children and me. I told my children not to go to that house again. The wife came down to my house one evening and told me she had good news and bad news and it was especially for me. Her little dog had been

run over and she had accidentally done it herself. She was sad about her pet. I was glad it was gone and she knew I would be.

Now we have terrible stories about dogs literally tearing children and adults apart. When the book was thrown at the California dog owner whose dogs killed a woman in the hallway of her own apartment house, I cheered.

Pets of that size and ferocity have no place in a city, let alone an apartment building, and if I were a friend or relative of the victim, I would sue the apartment building owner for allowing it and work for a law to prohibit it.

Now we have another story of a 10 year old girl being killed by six rottweilers in a neighbor's home. SIX, mind you, all in one household.

What is the mindset of the owners of these vicious and dangerous animals? Well, in my layperson's opinion, I think they are anti-social and can't get along with other human beings. Not only do they not like other people, they want to frighten and hurt them.

One of the shocking elements of campaigning for political office is approaching the houses and yards that contain huge, vicious dogs. In one small town I stepped on a front porch with a cheerful, friendly sign on the wall that read, "Welcome to our home." When I rang the doorbell, my heart practically stopped because three or four huge, drooling, snarling, barking dogs threw themselves against any available window and I was sure they were going to come right through. We can joke all we want about keeping politicians away, but I could have been a child, the mailman, a neighbor — anyone.



Frankly, I think I'd rather get shot by a gun than be slowly chewed up by a dog or dogs. I have great sympathy for the animals themselves. Animals should not be tied up or cooped up in a house all day while the owners are away. Vicious dogs have obviously been mistreated or trained to be that way. We should worry about the owners, not the animals.

These animals have got to be expensive to care for and to feed and frankly, many of the big dogs are in low income households. They are not only dangerous to others, but to children and probably the owners themselves. So the question remains, why are they there?

I'll check my sociology resources and let you know. Who knows, maybe I've hit it right on the button.

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