

In Napa County, where the sun shines on The Bay.

There aren't many Bay views in Napa County. And there aren't many hilltops available in Napa County. Then again, there aren't many like Bud Cain.

On Oat Hill at the western terminus of Napa Junction Road in American Canyon, south of the airport and above the Carneros wetlands, there is a property that will forever face the sunset. With the passing of Bud Cain in November 2007 this unique property is now for sale.

It was developed by Cain and his Oat Hill Partners in 1983 to house the company he founded in Palo Alto in 1965, Tribotech Corp. By 1983, the company had outgrown its Redwood City plant, and the Oat Hill site was chosen as an investment in the future. Napa County looked like a desirable place, where quality, educated employees would be glad to live. Tribotech was one of the first technology companies to headquarter in the County. The company focused on engineering development and manufacturing of ultra-high tolerance tools for aerospace, automotive and semiconductor systems.

At the time, there was not much of a there there - Oat Hill was surrounded by vacant land, very few houses, no Green Island or other industrial development, no Napa Junction Elementary School. In fact, there was no City of American Canyon - it was just a tiny crossroads town, near a mighty fine airport. One of the Oat Hill Partners, a 40-year member of Tribotech's Board, is a pilot and he liked to fly to Napa for the Board meetings.

In truth, Cain selected the site as much for its wildlife and scenery as for its location vis a vis major transportation arteries - Highways 29, 12, 121, 80 and 37. He was an outdoorsman. Every evening sunsets light the western slope and color the silver Bay; and every day birds of prey, pheasants, waterfowl, coyotes and rabbits grace the hill because of its promontory above the water and surrounding pastures. He knew it would be an inspiring place to work, and indeed it was. At its peak Tribotech employed 65 people, and for nearly 25 years Bud Cain and his team toiled there and enjoyed their little bit of heaven at the top of Napa Junction Road.

About the Road: Oat Hill Partners built their leg of the road, along with the County, since there was not one up to the hilltop site where a steel building filled with tons of technology was to go. In 1983 Cain oversaw a project that was done the way only an engineer would do it. The road in places is nearly a 20% grade, and was a challenge visible for miles around. Today, it is still in perfect condition and deluxe by ordinary standards, with raised berm cement gutters and extra wide cul de sac for emergency vehicle turnaround (and the best view anywhere of American Canyon).

Before there was much to look at, some saw American Canyon as just a backyard for Napa County. But the locals, and a few like Cain, felt pride in the place and believed the elements of a civic community were there. Instead of being the location of the dump for Napa County, leaders had the vision of it becoming a city.

In 1991 Bud Cain was Founding Chairman of American Canyon Incorporating Committee whose members earlier were the League to Form the City of American Canyon. This group wore red hats and did the groundwork door-to-door to inform and persuade residents of the benefits of holding an election to charter a City. The

first Mayor, City Council and the City Offices were born of this effort. Mr. Cain was also a founding member of American Canyon Chamber of Commerce. Ever after he was an active participant in the open planning and governing bodies that shaped American Canyon. As Tribotech Managing Director he was past and Honorary Board Member of the Napa Valley Economic Development Corporation, and the Flood Control Committee. Such a believer in this place was he.

Toward the end of 45 years under his leadership, Tribotech was phased out of manufacturing, into a collection of intellectual property the company was working to license. For decades the firm had developed precision solutions to engineering problems but so many of those designs originated in the mind of its founder.

Mr. Cain not only wanted to license his company's technology for shareholders, he also wanted to accomplish his civic priorities. As one of the stakeholders, in recent years he worked hard to input, his vision into the Oat Hill Master Plan, the planning effort led by the City to discover the optimum use for this special hill. The OHMP included Oat Hill Partners' and neighbor landowners' parcels that make up the entire hill. Sometime in 2006, their 300-acre concept for a residential community with sports field, park, school and nature trails stalled. Bud Cain was disappointed.

November 27, 2007 at the age of 82, Cain lost his battle with cancer, and his battle against time.

Now his partners have completed the removal of decades of specialty machinery and cleared the 20,000 square foot plant that sits on top of the hill. The soaring birds were unfazed by this sad goings on. The purposeful building that once hatched inventions stood vacant.

Ultimately the owners have no use for the 22-acre hilltop property. It is zoned Light Industrial but because of its 360-degree vantage point over southern Napa County, the Bay to Mt. Tamalpais, across to Sonoma, all of American Canyon from Soscol Ridge to the future Town Center and beyond to Mt. Diablo, it has a Specialty Commercial zoning overlay. This classification was sought by Bud Cain years ago recognizing that someday its use should be permitted for something that takes advantage of the rare views and location at the mouth of the Napa Valley.

The wildlife has gotten used to the land facing the western panorama. Future owners might plant vineyards there, or develop the property for a use that befits the unusual place. Time will tell. But this new chapter in the story of Oat Hill is one Bud Cain helped write.