

It was another postcard perfect weekend in Redlands. My beautiful bride Emily and I were walking on Fifth Street, once again experiencing the wonder of our great community. She was telling me how attentive and helpful I am, never checking my Blackberry or answering my cell phone while she speaks, or forgetting those errands she suggests to me on her helpful little lists (OK, so she may recall this conversation a little differently!).

Suddenly, through my intense concentration on what she was saying, burst an increasingly louder noise of what sounded like an approaching train.

As we arrived at the blind intersection of sidewalks at Fifth and State streets it suddenly dawned on me (OK, so maybe it was more like a rheostat being turned up slowly) that the approaching sound signaled an oncoming pack of skateboarders zipping along the sidewalk and that my wife's demise was imminent unless I took immediate action.

My catlike reflexes kicked in. I grabbed my dearest around the waist and pulled her from certain calamity! Realizing how close she came to meeting her maker, she loudly exclaimed "my hero!" and gave me one of those classic-old-time-movie kisses. The nearby diners in *Caprice's* outdoor patio showed their appreciation for my heroics by giving me a standing ovation! It really was a great day in Redlands!

OK, so maybe I didn't really save my wife. It just might be true that SHE alerted ME to the kids and kept me from being flattened. But, since she doesn't have editorial control over my column, history is mine to write!

The skateboarders rode off into the sunset, oblivious of our near collision. Why? Because they're just kids, enjoying the wonder of living in Redlands in their own way. Many of us can relate to the aggravation skaters can cause downtown, on school campuses, church property, at the Redlands Bowl, etc. and this has become a significant quality-of-life policing issue.

Redlands kids have been skateboarding since I was a kid tooling down Primrose Avenue on my big, heavy, slow moving wooden board in the early '60s. With the advent of "street skating" – popularized by skating legends like Tony Hawk – the tension between skaters and their communities has increased dramatically. In my day, "grinding" on curbs, benches, planters or handrails was unheard of. We also didn't use downtown sidewalks as our skating raceways. But we were still kids and I'm sure we found other ways to annoy adults!

The police are placed in the middle of this issue. We try and keep skaters from damaging private property in their pursuit of the perfect "grind." We also try and project an image to young people that the police want to protect and serve them while helping them grow to be contributing members of society – while still allowing them an appropriate degree of freedom to be kids. Remember, cops were kids once too!

I believe the solution to this dilemma in which the police find themselves is through the creation of a Redlands skateboard park. I am proud to be part of a coalition being led by Mayor Jon Harrison, local businessman Mark Gardner, skate mother and all-

around-great-human being Susan Broderick, *First Baptist Church* Associate Pastor Bill Maury-Holmes, City Manager John Davidson and Public Works Director Ron Mutter.

This group, along with many of our local skating kids, is working to create a specific place where skaters can enjoy one of the fastest-growing sports in America -- a place that will draw them away from downtown, churches and the Bowl. From the skaters' perspective, these venues currently provide the only places in Redlands with the physical challenges that make skating so much fun.

I have spoken with many of these kids and found them to be polite and respectful. They all agree that, with a skate park, Redlands youth will have no reason to skate elsewhere and the problems we currently experience will dissipate.

Our kids are the future of this town. All of them. Even skaters. I deeply believe we need to provide multiple, varied recreational opportunities for kids. A skate park is one of them. In doing so, we will dramatically reduce the problems in the skater-community dynamic. This is why cities like Yucaipa, Fontana and Chino have built their own skate parks.

In the coming months you will be hearing more about the proposed skate park. If you would like to help in this endeavor call Susan Broderick at 909-435-4804 or e-mail her at skateparkredlands@netzero.net. You can also call me at 909-335-4744 or e-mail me at chief@redlandspolice.org.