

## FALK:

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recently caused all the uproar?

**Falk:** I was not involved in that transaction but its a property value issue. The CCR&Rs were no longer being enforced since the Borrego Springs Community Association had been dissolved. It must have seemed that there was nothing to prevent building a manufactured home. The property owner must have thought he would be governed only by the county. However, that's one of our highest-end neighborhoods and people want the values of their homes to be maintained, so it was very upsetting for them to see a manufactured home there that might bring down the values of nearby homes. When a real estate agent does a market analysis of an area she/he includes the sales of homes in that area. If there's one that's going to sell for much less, it will affect the value of the others. Manufactured homes can be found all over Borrego, but that was one area where they were not found. The neighbors did what I didn't think would happen. They got together and went to court over it. It hasn't been resolved yet but it's an important case that we're all following. This was

unusual because it was a court action to stop something already in progress and permitted. It's an interesting case. Another important issue to follow is the flood issue in Borrego - the FEMA flood map. The Federal Emergency Management Association has a flood map that creates the guidelines for the county building requirements for Borrego, which have changed. They are changing in ways we learn every time we sell a piece of property and someone investigates for that particular lot what the requirements will be. The last investigation someone did, just a couple of days ago, revealed that for this property, if they didn't have a full acre, they'd have to use piers to build on, one foot above the flood level for that area. If they had a full acre to work with, they could use a pad to build up the soil. Some people have had trouble getting accurate information because the county has to change their rules to comply with the new flood map by FEMA, so there's been some uncertainty. I think it's settling down now and the information is much better than it was for awhile. I like to put people directly in touch with the county so they don't get false information. It can be tricky ... but people have their

dreams. People are looking to buy. There are houses on the market. There are not quite as many as the year before but it's only down by about 10 percent. It was lower but more listings are coming on. I think it will be a good year, as long as the national economy doesn't do something peculiar to scare people. People are cautious, but what I'm seeing more is that people are feeling unsafe about investing in stocks and bonds and more confident investing in real estate. We're getting a lot of investment calls.

**Beck:** What are your thoughts on Destination Borrego Springs?

**Falk:** I basically think it's a wonderful idea and I support it. One thought I have though ... I went with my family to Zion National Park in Utah this summer, which is a hugely popular tourist destination known for its natural beauty. Millions of people come there and it has been set up really well. In the high season you can't get into the park unless you're on a bus, but even so, the buses are crowded and there are many, many people coming through. I heard some locals in a shop talking about how it was almost unbearably successful. There were just too many visitors. It was all too much for

them. So, we're far away from that now, but that's a place also not on the beaten trail. You have to work hard to get there. I think this town can grow and be happier growing some, but there's going to be a point where we don't want it to grow much bigger. So there's a balance there. There is a small town feeling here, and that's what makes it so lovable.

**Beck:** Where did you live before coming to Borrego?

**Falk:** When I taught at Saint Mary's I lived in the Bay Area. Then I briefly lived in a small town in Northern California called Petrolia. It's very beautiful and has a very small population. I worked for the Mattole Salmon Group - a group trying to make sure that the salmon continue to run in the river there. I really couldn't make enough money there, so I went back to teaching at Saint Mary's and then worked for another group in Oakland. I finally made enough money to relocate to Borrego.

**Beck:** It sounds like you're good at reinventing yourself.

**Falk:** I've reinvented myself a few times in my life. I wonder ... is there another life in store for Rebecca Falk or not? I don't know yet.