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Lafayette City Council Honors Longtime Community Advocate Don Lively Turns 90

By Rosylyn Aragones Stenzel



Don and Dorothy Lively await start of Lafayette City Council meeting Photo Rosylyn Aragones Stenzel

In a break from the normal order of business, the Lafayette City Council recognized the 90th birthday of one of Lafayette's most colorful citizens, Don Lively, on December 14th at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Mayor Don Tatzin read a Proclamation stating many of Lively's contributions to Lafayette. When asked why the special recognition for Lively, Tatzin replied, "One because he's 90, and it's nice to celebrate people who do (turn 90). And because he has given lots of input at the city council meetings; sometimes he agrees and sometimes not, but he's always constructive. We consider him an unofficial member of the city family."

Lively first saw Lafayette in 1942 when he drove from Treasure Island - where he was stationed in the Navy - to Walnut Creek. The then rural town of Lafayette reminded him of the small town, Ojai, in Southern California where he grew up.

Lively, a WW II and Korean War veteran, worked for many years in the telecommunications and engineering fields including working for AT&T in Iran for four years. He transferred back to the U. S., living in New Jersey before moving back to Lafayette in 1961. Since then he has been very active through the years in helping to steer the growth and vision for Lafayette. He has sat on several task forces and commissions; including the CATV Commission (assisted

with franchise negotiations for the first cable television providers), Technology Task Force (advocating improvements in the city's technology) and the Library Building Committee, just to name a few.

In addition, he is one of the founding members of the Lafayette Taxpayer's Association and the Alliance of Contra Costa Taxpayers. The Lafayette Taxpayer's Association, formed in 1991, says Lively, "Works on both sides of the street; sometimes opposes taxes and other times on task forces to support and sell taxes." The Alliance of Contra Costa Taxpayers is county-wide coalition modeled after the Lafayette Taxpayer's Association.

Lively and his wife Dorothy (also known as Casey) have been married for 67 years. He credits her as "making him whatever he is." They met while both working for Telco in Southern California. They are both avid painters and have several paintings with personal significance displayed in their home. One particular painting has special meaning. It depicts the 1936 Ford Sedan that he drove when he first saw Lafayette. He also jokingly refers to the Ford as the Loveboat, which he drove when courting Dorothy. Lively has also painted depictions of the USS Finback Submarine and USS Sperry, both of which he served on during WWII.

Although he is somewhat limited due to health issues, Lively continues to advocate for limited government and be a part of the public dialogue. The best part of living in Lafayette? Lively says, "Its classical, small-town atmosphere. The wonderful role that its founding principals imposed on volunteer participation in the direction and governance of the city. Those people who laid down the 3 P's, public safety, planning and public works - confining local government's activity to just those areas. I think if that kind of strictness applied to every level of government, we'd have a much finer country and state."

Lastly, when asked what his secret is for a long life, Lively explains, "Good genes, an interest in life and all it offers - plus, joy of watching our three great kids carve out their places in the world. This includes trying to hang onto the great country we were fortunate to have been born into!"

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