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## Politics is Music to Supervisor Andersen's Ears

By Nick Marnell



Candace Anderson stands in front of her Lafayette office. Photo Andy Scheck

major to public policy and enrolled at the BYU law school.

She began her law career in Hawaii writing appellate briefs for the prosecutor's office and arguing them before the Hawaii Supreme Court. Andersen put her career on hold after she started a family and moved to California. "The kids needed a mom more than a lawyer," she said. "Then maybe they wouldn't need a lawyer later."

In 1991, as she rocked a colicky baby to sleep, Andersen flipped through the cable channels and noticed a posting on the Morgan Hill government station for openings in the parks commission and the rent stabilization commission.

"I can do that," she said. "And I can give back to the community."

She secured both appointments, and her career as a public servant rocketed from there: Morgan Hill city council, Danville city council, Danville mayor. Just as Andersen was about to begin her second term as Danville mayor in 2011, Gayle Uilkema announced her retirement from the Board of Supervisors and she urged Andersen to run for the District 2 seat.

"Why would I want to do that?" she said. "My goal was to have Gayle reelected."

But the two met for a three-hour lunch, at which Uilkema walked Andersen through the job description, lecturing her about the time and intensity the job of supervisor demanded. "And she warned me against taking this job if I was in it for the money," Andersen said. In December 2011, she decided to run, and Uilkema's endorsement help Andersen win a close, intense race.

Her most rewarding moment as a public official came when the county voted to implement Laura's Law, permitting courts to order treatment for those who have been hospitalized or jailed because of mental illness or have exhibited violence toward themselves or others. Her toughest call was her recent vote as a board member of the Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association to lower its target investment rate to 7 percent, forcing government employees and agencies to

Had Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen pursued her mother's wishes with the same zeal that she has devoted to her civic career, Andersen might have become the concertmaster with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

"My mother wanted me to be a musician," said Andersen, whose District 2 includes Lamorinda. She started playing the piano, then the violin in her high school string quartet. She attended Brigham Young University as a music major and joined the university orchestra.

"But I found out there were a lot better musicians out there than I was," Andersen said. Seduced by a political science course, and with the guidance of her father - a lawyer who taught Andersen how to craft an argument, even against topics like the imposition of her own curfew - she switched her

contribute more toward their retirement funds.

"It was the right thing to do, but with a serious cost to the county," she said.

Andersen was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Honolulu. She attended the same private school that produced another famous public servant. "You mean Barry?" she said. "When he came on the political scene they announced this senator from Hawaii, Barrack Obama, from Punahou School. I called my sister in Boston. Who is Barrack Obama?" That's Barry, confirmed her sister, who was in Obama's class, one year behind Andersen. "Barry? Chubby Barry?" Andersen said. "I would have never thought he'd grow up to be president. He was busy on the stoner bench. I was this nice Mormon girl, stuck in the uncool orchestra schedule." They later met at the White House at a Conference of Mayors and acknowledged their high school history.

Andersen, a Republican, has nothing positive to say about her party's presumptive presidential nominee, Donald Trump. "The rhetoric is not acceptable," Andersen said. "He should be articulating messages that will resonate with voters across the aisle that offer true steps to make America great. I have yet to see that. I've only heard unprofessional and mean-spirited discourse. I am undecided as to whom I will vote for."

Andersen loves to cook, with a weakness for rich desserts. "By the time I graduated high school, I could cook anything," she said. And dark chocolate gets her through tedious civic meetings. Asked what she was reading, she pulled up "The Nine," a book about the Supreme Court by Jeffrey Toobin, on her electronic device.

Andersen does sport a few blemishes on her resume. She landed in big trouble when she rolled the family jeep in Molokai. "Right to the edge of the guardrail. One broken arm." And she was busted in high school when she snuck out for ice cream after a church function. Andersen even dated the occasional boy her mother did not approve of. Chubby Barry would have been impressed.

Despite her oftentimes lone wolf approach to county issues - such as voting against allocating funds for the struggling East Contra Costa County Fire Protection District and voting against her own pay raise - Andersen was elected board chair in January. In June she ran unopposed and was re-elected as District 2 supervisor. She said she vows to continue to focus on issues that affect her cities.

"As your county supervisor, what can I do for you?" she said.

Reach the reporter at: [nick@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:nick@lamorindaweekly.com)

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