

Former Santa Cruz city manager foresaw 'upper-income area'



KOESTER

By SHANNA McCORD
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Former City Manager David Carl Koester was more right than wrong when he predicted Santa Cruz's emerging no-growth attitude would bring rapidly escalating home prices and make the city "an upper-income area."

Koester made that statement in 1977, four years before retiring from the city

to take a job with Bechtel Corp., and moving with his wife Jean to Saudi Arabia's port city of Jubail on the Arabian coast.

Koester, who led Santa Cruz City Hall from 1962 to 1981 — a time of major change for the city that brought a University of California campus, Loch Lomond Dam, the struggle over a statewide cap on property tax rates, the development of DeLaveaga Golf Course and a swing from conservative to pro-

gressive politics — died Monday in the small, northern Idaho town of Sandpoint. He was 85.

"Dave was a character," said City Manager Dick Wilson, who was hired by Koester in 1979 and served as assistant city manager until Koester retired. "He had a wonderful sense of humor. He would say and do things that had people in stitches."

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Koester

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Born on his family's homestead in Roundup, Mont., Koester began his education in a one-room schoolhouse on a farm in Ronan with a live-in teacher and his younger brother Don as his only classmate.

After graduating from Ronan High School in 1938, Koester worked several jobs in Seattle before enlisting in the U.S. Coast Guard at the beginning of World War II. He served aboard a minesweeper, escorting ships from Dutch Harbor, Alaska, to Russia until leaving the service in 1943.

Koester met his wife Jean McClure Bachman at a USO dance at the Hollywood Canteen. They were married for 58 years until Jean died in 2001.

He earned an engineering

degree from Oregon State University with help from the G.I. Bill. In 1952, he earned a master's degree in public administration from Kansas University, which helped launch his 30-year career as a city manager.

Koester worked as city manager of Baker, Ore., and Roseville before accepting the job in Santa Cruz in 1962.

"I found him to be one of the most dedicated from the old-school of city management," said former Mayor Bert Muhly, 82, who served on the City Council from 1973-1981 and traveled with Koester to the Canary Islands in 1974 to establish a sister city with Santa Cruz de Tenerife. "He was a very close guardian of city finances and he kept his eye closely on the general fund. Dave served at a very critical time."

During Koester's tenure, the city's public works program was started, the sewer treatment

David Carl Koester

BORN: June 25, 1920.

DIED: Feb. 6 2006.

EDUCATION: Oregon State University and Kansas University.

SURVIVORS: Sons David Koester of Alameda and Craig Koester of Sandpoint, Idaho; daughter Debra Kellerman of Hope, Idaho; brother Ward Koester of Sheridan, Wyo., and granddaughter Chiminah Koester of San Diego.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Preferred to The Healing Garden, c/o Bonner Community Hospice, P.O. Box 1448, Sandpoint, ID 83864.

SERVICES: A service celebrating his life will take place this spring. Visit www.wakeviewfuneral.com for more information.

created and several new bridges were built over the San Lorenzo River.

Koester and his wife traveled extensively, visiting all 50 states as well as China, Australia, Europe, Canada, Mexico, South America, the Middle East and Scandinavia.

He volunteered with the Red Cross after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the Salvation Army and Hospice Caring Services. He was also a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Cruz.

Koester was also an adept card player, who bluffed in poker, shot the moon in hearts and was a sly bidder in bridge. He enjoyed camping and boating.

Koester's wife Jean and daughter Karen Diane Lee died before him.

plant was completed, a two-story annex to City Hall was built, the City-County Library System was

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