

New Redevelopment Director Carl White Enjoys Challenge

(Editor's note: This is another in a series of articles on leading Santa Cruz area citizens which appears weekly in the Sunday edition of The Sentinel.)

By Don C. Becker

Bright and early tomorrow morning, Olin Carl White will pull away from the breakfast table, bid his family goodbye, and head down to the redevelopment agency where he will assume his new duties as director.

For White, a one-time ditch-digging minister, the job will be the realization of a long standing desire.

"I quit the ministry because I wasn't suited to it," White said in his office Thursday. "I was too eager to accomplish something I could see."

Now ready to be involved in what he calls "pure planning," former Mayor White will have plenty of opportunity to see tangible, material results from his efforts.

Although the job is not permanent, White is looking forward to the redevelopment directorship with all the gusto of a freshman football player at Notre Dame.

"I'm on top of the job right now," White accented in an easily recognizable Arkansas drawl, "I just hope the job doesn't get on top of me."

Our city hall reporter, who has frequent visits with the wry-talking White, calls the new director a "cracker barrel philosopher."

His subtle, impish plays at soft-spoken humor, have long been an asset to White.

While serving as mayor, he many times was able to maintain peace on the council, prevent a heated argument, by merely inserting a comment that might be funny for any number of reasons.

Does White have any fear of his new job? He has to try to fill the shoes of Earl Newkirk, who is regarded as one of the top urban renewal men in the country. For the past month, White, who resigned as mayor to take the redevelopment post, has been studying his new job under Newkirk.

"The vast amount of the work is a little overwhelming," says White, adding with stern confidence, "but I shall rise above that."

"Carl is a hard-working, conscientious man," said City Manager Bob Klein. "I think he will do the job."

Those familiar with redevelopment and the two Santa Cruz projects are well aware of the manifold complexities the director's job presents.

As director, Carl will be in charge of the administration of every phase of the details for the San Lorenzo River development and the up-coming beach redevelopment.

The importance of the kind of job White is able to do will be well brought out when the planners sit down and start evaluating data now being collected for the second local project — the beach area.

In no small way, White will be an influence on what is done at the beach. And what is done will undoubtedly have a lasting influence on the city.

Basically, White's new job calls for him to coordinate the many activities of the local agency, act as a liaison man between the local government and the federal government and also deal with the people in the relocation of houses.

Arkansas-born White, the son of



Olin Carl White

a farmer, has had an unusual life to date.

When he was graduated from high school, he went to work for the Woolworth dime store chain in the mid-west. He stayed with that firm for four years, held some top supervisory posts, also did things like demonstrating electric trains.

From a deeply religious family, Carl quit his job in 1935 and launched a three and a half year study for the ministry. Attending Augsburg college in Minneapolis and Anderson college in Indiana, Carl qualified himself for the ministry, even though he was not graduated.

Married in 1933, Carl had to quit college in 1940 when stork-created problems took his wife out of her teaching job at Anderson college.

Heading west, Carl settled on the San Francisco peninsula, was the pastor of two small parishes of the Church of God.

"I had to go to work to subsidize my income," Carl recalls. "I took a job as a ditch-digger. One day the fellow that hired me asked me if I could drive a nail. I said sure. A little while after that he took me down and got me in the carpenter's union. That's how I got in the construction

business."

A taste of the construction business was enough to convince Carl that he might be better off there than in the ministry. Today, Carl seemingly has no regrets about his decision.

He is still a key figure in the church and is currently serving as the lay chairman of the Northern California Church of God association.

With his wife and three boys, Carl leads an exemplary life. One close friend of Carl's noted that the White family probably rates a constant smile from above.

The eldest son, James, has just stepped down as president of the student body at the Santa Cruz high school and the other two boys, Dennis and Marshall, show plenty of promise.

Santa Cruz acquired White and family during the early 1940's when he and another man bought the Seabright court. Carl became active in community and church affairs almost as soon as he got here.

He operated the Seabright court until 1950 and worked at it full-time. In 1948, he ran for the city council and was narrowly defeated for a seat. He still balanced enough votes to win an appointment to the city planning

commission, where he stayed until he was elected to the council in 1955. In 1954, White was elected chairman of the planning commission.

In 1950, White had picked up a general contracting license. He started building houses after that and has erected 60 ("one at a time"), since.

Other local activities of White include work on the chamber of commerce board of directors when that currently smooth running body was just getting back on its feet and also as a member of the council's industrial committee as well as serving as president of the Apartment House Owners association.

Before being appointed to the redevelopment job, Carl was working as escrow officer for the Penniman Title company.

"One night after I heard Earl was leaving I told my wife I would like to have his job," Carl revealed. "I never told another person. When they asked me if I wanted the job, I was greatly pleased. I never asked for the job."

"It's going to take long hours of study and night work for me to prove worthy of the confidence the board has placed in me."

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