

SC Pays Tribute To Koester

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A warmly affectionate ovation was given to City Manager David Koester Wednesday at a testimonial dinner marking the end of his 18-year tenure as the administrative head of the city of Santa Cruz government.

Mayors and Santa Cruz City Council members past and present, county supervisors, Mayor Bill Johnston of Watsonville and Mayor Jun Lee of Scotts Valley were among some 275 persons who gathered early and stayed late at the Holiday Inn in Santa Cruz to salute Koester for his many personal and professional contributions to the betterment of the city and the countywide community.

Koester leaves the city manager's post Friday. On April 1 he will become city manager for Jubail, a huge industrial city under construction in Saudi Arabia on the coast of the Arabian Sea.

The dinner was arranged by Michele Kibrick, the City Council aide, and Betty Paradise, Koester's secretary, to be a "roast."

Speaker after speaker came through so brilliantly one would have imagined their tongues were indeed grilles.

But Koester got some of his own back during an often hilarious "thank you" speech. Looking down at some members of the present City Council, for instance, he said with exquisite pride: "They showed the city of Jubail on television the other night. Now there's a city. They called it the world's first 21st Century city."

Mayor Joseph Ghio called Koester's departure "a rare occasion, saying that Koester had set a record for holding the city manager's job. That record "doubtless will last forever in the history of our city."

Ghio announced there is now an interregnum, which he defined as "a period of time when the old order leaveth and the new order taketh over."

And he put the quality of Koester's accomplishments for the city into perspective by saying that Koester was responsible for transforming Santa Cruz from a kind of Oklahoma city of the vintage 1934 into "the vibrant, alive, dynamic town it is today."

Koester's family, with his wife Jean beside him, was at the head table: daughters Debbie and Karen with their husbands Don Kellerman and Ed Lee, respectively, Carol and David Koester Jr., and Craig Koester.

But there was an adversary at the head table, also, and Koester complained about this in his speech, saying that each and every time he tried to get more butter he was told "no!"

"Finally," Koester reported, "I said to this waiter, 'Do you know who I am? I'm the city manager. I'm the man being honored tonight.' I thought that would do it. The waiter was unimpressed. 'Do you know who I am?' he asked. 'I'm the man in charge of the butter.'"

And around the room folks like Dean McHenry, Harold Hyde, City Manager Steve Burrell of Capitola, Ernie Dillon and Lionel Stoloff laughed and applauded.

John Daly, who was mayor when Koester was hired in 1962, began the "roast" by confiding that he himself didn't want to hire Koester "because he had this hayseed, down-country approach. He was the most laid-back fellow I had seen, I think he even had straw in his back pocket." But, Daly finally conceded, Koester is now "a suave, smooth, articulate guy." And he added: "I agree he did an excellent job."

Gordon Sinclair, Sentinel editor, noted that Koester has developed a local reputation for developing a "rainy day fund," and he explained to newcomers: "We once had a drought so he built an addition to City Hall."

There came appreciative applause from Joe Ringrose, a former assistant city manager, Judy and Tim Sadlier, City Clerk Pat Kenyon, Dietrich Pahnke, Tom Deveau and others among the attendees.

Vern Vern Smith, the 1973-74 mayor, drew one of

the great belly laughs of the evening when he confided to the crowd: "Police Chief Geno Pini has been working the Pacific Garden Mall this week to get enough stuff to fly Dave out all alone."

And Smith added: "We all admire you Dave and wish you the best of luck."

Jim Hammond noted that Koester has served under 20 mayors and 32 City Council members, that one of the problems a city manager has is that every council member becomes an expert on every subject the moment he or she is elected. Hammond read a tribute from Al McCommon, who said: "You came to Santa Cruz, Dave, when we desperately needed a leader."

Lorette Wood, 1971-72 mayor and first woman to be elected to the City Council, told the audience that in addition to being suave and smooth, "Dave is smart, too. Right after my election I went to City Hall to get acquainted after hearing they didn't know what they were going to do about a woman on the council. Well, I got there and Dave was out. It has been a pleasure working with Dave, but he is leaving unfinished business behind him; we have Broadway not going to Brommer and a lot of pollution on Soquel. We have bad traffic problems on Mission Street. But I know that Dave will do a better job where he is going."

Ted Foster, a former mayor, credited Koester with the development of the mall and with eliminating the growing of tomato plants at City Hall.

Bill Fieberling, Santa Cruz public works director, who got a job under Koester in Roseville and then came to Santa Cruz in 1962 with Koester, complained he is still driving the same old car Koester let him buy up in Roseville. "But," Fieberling said, "we are going to miss him; we are going to miss him very much."

And from such city workers as Betty Paradise, Jesus Armas, Michele Kibrick, Gloria DiLorenzo and others came heavy applause.

Mayor Bill Johnston of Watsonville really "roasted" Koester with a "Mayor's Proclamation" that insisted California had lowered its entrance requirements to let Koester in over the border. "He always made a point of not giving any of his seven

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Mayor Ghio's gift to Koester

assistant managers anything important to do and so he had the longest tenure of any city manager," Johnston declared.

But in a more serious vein Johnston said: "We in Watsonville have been privileged to know you, Dave." He awarded Koester a plaque from the the Watsonville City Council and himself.

Nick Drobac delivered an "in memoriam" to Koester's neckties, "which were some of the most God-awful I have ever seen." Councilman Bert Muhly delivered a limerick in tribute that was the smash hit of the evening; Frank Gallagher saluted Koester on behalf of area senior citizens, and Norm Lezin, 1964-65 mayor "crowned" Koester with a burnoose and offered to let him take some 20 or 30 of the young Pacific Garden Mall people with him to Saudi Arabia.

Koester was given his desk chair as a memento of his long service here, a "sculpture" long in his office and admired only by him, a handsome nautical clock, a city seal with the dates of his years of service inscribed on it, a lifetime pass to the DeLaveaga Golf Course, which Koester was instrumental in getting built, and a history of Santa Cruz by Margaret Koch from the city employees. A swaggering gorilla complete with eyeglasses delivered a sandpail of goodies to Koester, and Ghio even gave him a city of Santa Cruz map so that he can find his way home after his service in Saudi Arabia.

And former mayors Eugene Fleming, Norman Walters, Al Castagnola and Larry Edler rose and applauded after Koester had said: "In two years or so, I'll be back."

A COUNCILMAN'S TRIBUTE

Santa Cruz City Councilman Bert Muhly won thunderous approval from some 275 persons at Holiday Inn Wednesday for the following limericks in tribute to City Manager David Koester on the eve of his departure to become city manager of Jubail in Saudi Arabia.

There once was a man from Montana,
Who wore a big red bandana,
He was tall and lean
And had a pretty wife, Jean,
And became the Santa Cruz top banana.

* * *

Our top banana's name was Dave,
Who a Council member named Anne thought
a knave,

She claimed he managed our city
Like G. Gordon Liddy
Driving poor Anne damned near her grave.

* * *

As a tactician he was one of the best,
Getting his way often with a jest,
The Council would huddle
And on issues would muddle

While Dave played it close to his vest.

* * *

A City Manager of excellence, he proved it:
With budget and savings he grooved it.
When the Council discovered
Where the money was covered,
Dave grinned as he said: "I just moved it."

* * *

There's a sandy land with nary a creek,
Where dear friend Dave a fortune will seek,
He and Jean will set sail
To a place called Jubail,
Where Jean hopes to dance Sheik to Sheik.

* * *

So, as Jean packs up her new veil
For her trip to sunny Jubail,
Let's all blow the bugle
For our manager so frugal
And wish them both a hearty All Hail!

* * *

Muhly then gave Jean Koester a black veil and Dave a banana.