

At 86, Walter Jordan doesn't look or act his age

By BOB SMITH
STAFF WRITER.

Walter Jordan recently had his second hip-replacement operation.

The first one lasted for seven years. When Jordan asked the surgeon how long the second joint would last, the surgeon replied: "Oh, about 20 years."

"Good," Jordan responded, making plans for the third replacement. "I'll see you when I am 106."

Jordan, then 86, is 5 percent along the way toward his goal this year. He will celebrate his 87th birthday on Thursday.

Aptos firemen are planning a birthday party for "The Boss,"

as his coffee cup proclaims to the world, on Saturday.

Jordan, with 16 years on the fire district's board of directors, is now the oldest elected official in Santa Cruz county.

Jordan neither looks or acts his "age."

When he checked into Dominican Hospital last year for the second left-hip operation (the cement holding the shaft in the bone had loosened with time), a nurse couldn't believe the age given on the admitting papers — she was sure it was a mistake.

"No, I really am 86 years old," Jordan assured her.

Jordan still walks each day

from his Aptos Terrace home to the Rancho del Mar coffee shop for his morning coffee, although he has bowed to time and allows a friend to drive him home afterwards.

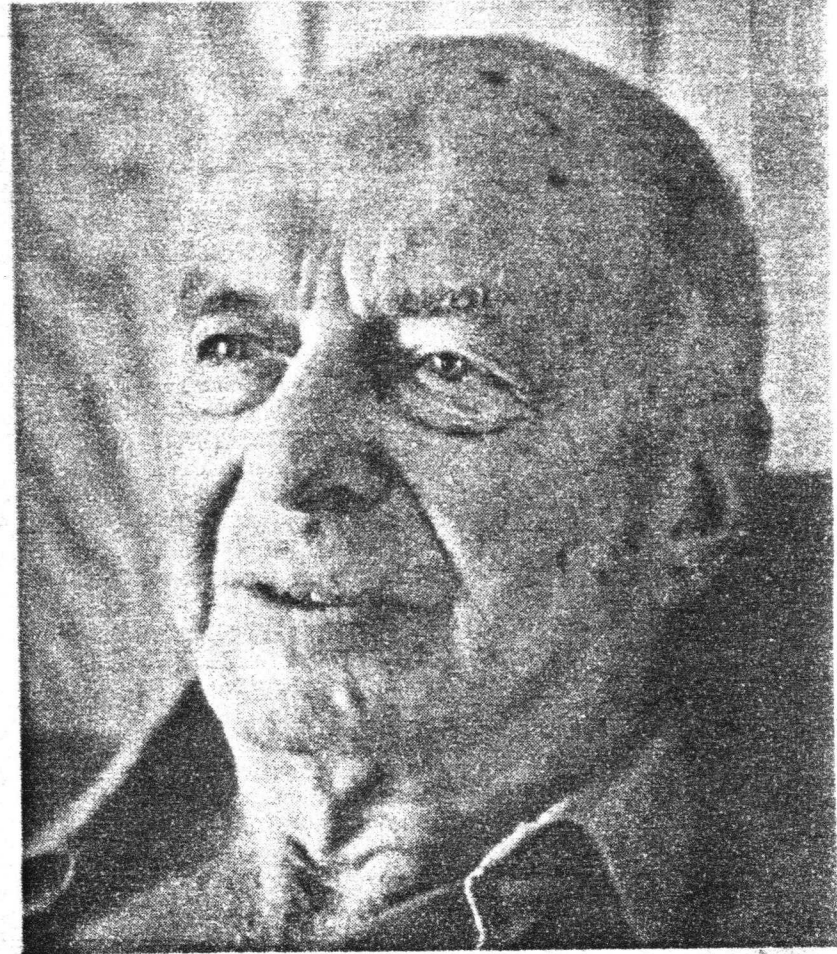
A morning stroll and coffee have been his regime for years. Originally, he walked to the old Pop Inn (where O.H. Hannegan's is now) for coffee and then walked home again, sometimes walking over to the fire department to say hello.

Jordan and his late wife, Bernice, moved to Aptos Terrace in 1961 when he retired from Pacific Gas and Electric Co. after a career that spanned four decades, and she as a public health nurse for Alameda County.

The Jordans bought an unfinished 2,000-square-foot home in Aptos for \$41,500, then went back to Oakland and sold their home there in just three days.

Jordan, at his retirement, was a self-made man in charge of the utility company's powerhouses and substations in the East Bay.

"Nuts and bolts — nothing but that in my head," Jordan says. He's a machinist who tired of the monotony of, say, drilling three holes in each of



Walter Jordan

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200 identical castings. So he went to work for PG&E in its powerhouses, maintaining the generators, switchboards and the myriad other items that a utility needs to control and generate electric power.

He developed an encyclopedic knowledge of the power distribution business that rivaled that of many engineers, though he never finished high school.

When he retired, he was in charge of the maintenance force for the company's East Bay division.

"Today, I wouldn't even be allowed to fill out a job application for PG&E," he says.

Jordan became active in the Aptos Terrace Improvement Assn. shortly after he and his wife moved to the Midcounty, working with other association members to get a more reliable

water system for the area.

"We used to run out of water every summer Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m.," he recalls. The problem, as it turned out, was that the old Monterey Bay Water Co. had leased one of its production wells to the owners of the Cabrillo Golf Course as irrigation water.

"We were out of water but I could look out the window and see every sprinkler on the golf course going," Jordan said.

Association members went to the then-new Soquel Creek Water District with their complaints, and the well was hooked up to the community water system again and the immediate water shortage was over.

It wasn't long after that Jordan found himself drafted for a seat on the association

board of directors. And shortly after that, he was elected president of the association.

Jordan was active in two attempts by the county to annex the Aptos Terrace area to the sanitation district. The first attempt Jordan opposed, because the district had no plans to install sewers in the area. "They simply wanted to annex us for the tax revenue," Jordan said.

The association, which Jordan headed for four terms, opposed that move. The second time around, the county planned sewers for the area. That time, the association leadership was on the annexation bandwagon.

Jordan was asked to fill a vacancy on the Aptos Fire Board in 1966 when it was just a three-man board. He stayed for

a couple of years but resigned in disgust when, among other things, he realized that department was being run by the board chairman.

He came back on the fire board after a three-year absence and has been on the board ever since — through the fights to build a second fire station for the district and to establish paramedic service for the district's residents, and through two tax-increase elections.

Now, he's one of three Aptos board members on the newly formed Joint Powers Agency board of directors that will oversee the merger of the La Selva Beach and Aptos fire departments this summer.

Jordan has also been an inveterate "board watcher" — one of the faithful that attend every Board of Supervisors' meeting.

He's sat through the tenures of at least five Midcounty supervisors.

The present board, he says, seems more interested in making speeches than in taking action.

"I'm kind of disenchanted with those guys," Jordan says of the present Board of Supervisors.

"Gary (Patton) makes a speech and then Cucchiara makes a speech. They tell the county counsel to write an ordinance and then Gary rewrites it.

"Cucchiara talks for 15 minutes without saying anything. And then Dan Forbus starts up and sounds like he's back on the quarterdeck of his Navy ship."

On the present Midcounty supervisor, Robley Levy, Jordan says he likes her on a personal level.

But he's disappointed with her performance on the board.

"She could run that board if she wanted to be real political. She could get anything she wanted as a swing vote."

He says he supported Beverly Moore in the last primary election.