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Lafayette's First Birthday Poster Boy - Marechal Duncan

By Cathy Tyson



Marechal Duncan Photo John Otto

It's not every day that your picture can be seen cruising all over town. Lafayette's Marechel Duncan recently received noteworthy birthday presents to recognize a lifetime of contributions from friends and family: his mug is prominently displayed on the Spirit Van, a shuttle service for seniors, and he was honored by a special proclamation from the Mayor and the City Council. Both the birthday and the recipient are extraordinary - Marechal (pronounced Marshall) Duncan celebrated 90 years on St. Patrick's Day - March 17, 2012.

"Marechal is a dear man, very committed to the well-being of seniors in Lamorinda. It was a pleasure to participate in honoring him by putting a 'Happy 90th, Marechal Duncan! From All Our Hearts, For All You've Done!' banner on the Lamorinda Spirit Van," said Mary Bruns, Lamorinda Senior Transportation Coordinator. "Marechal serves as Co-Chairperson for the Lafayette Community Foundation Liaison Committee for Seniors which sponsors the annual Lafayette Senior Symposium. Marechal's dream is to pull together local organizations that serve seniors to collaborate, share information, and provide the resources to allow seniors to age in their own homes."

With a twinkle in his blue eyes, this retiree was recently recognized at a City Council meeting with a proclamation honoring his active involvement in the community for more than 50 years. He's been busy fellow, starting out when his four kids were little serving as a Boy Scout leader for 20 years and an LMYA basketball coach. He also volunteered to be the Co-chair of the Lafayette Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1998. And there's more - he's an active member of the Lafayette Historical Society and is currently

the Vice President, he also just received a certificate as a "senior" member, someone over 90, of SIRS - Sons in Retirement, and was a charter member of the Lamorinda Toastmasters Club.

"He's very modest, which is why I hope we will celebrate him as a community. He has been a passionate advocate for seniors, which is why we got a campaign to fund the first ever 'advertising' banners on the Lamorinda Spirit Van to announce and acknowledge his contributions," said Kathy Merchant, Executive Director of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation.

Born in Quincy, Massachusetts in 1922, Duncan quips, "I didn't like the weather there, and at seventeen months old, suggested to my parents that we move the family to San Diego." He's been on the west coast, for the most part, ever since - spending his last 57 years at a lovely home in the Silver Springs neighborhood. He and wife Doris were one of the first families to move into the neighborhood, purchasing their lot and the recently constructed home for \$28,000, "a little bit cheaper then," said Duncan.

He joined the Navy in 1940, before World War II and served for just shy of six years. In a stroke of good luck, he was based in San Diego and assigned to be a mine sweeper at Pearl Harbor, but hadn't yet shipped out to the Hawaiian base when the infamous attack occurred.

Upon his return to the states he earned a bachelor of science degree from UC Berkeley and a few years later got a master's at Pepperdine University. Duncan worked as the western area sales manager for Motorola, "I introduced radio paging to the west coast," a new concept back in the day.

The happy couple raised their four children and have become an integral part of the fabric of Lafayette. Now they have seven grandchildren, and are still active in a number of capacities around town and show no sign of slowing down. "Keep busy" is their motto, and they live up to it. Duncan regularly plays nine holes of golf, ditching a golf cart in favor of walking with his golf clubs, and his lovely wife Doris, also 90 this year, participates in bridge and supports sorority and panhellenic organizations. Both are an inspiration and great assets to the community and thanks to good health and good genes, epitomize the concept of gracefully aging in place.

Future birthday, anniversary or graduation banner greetings are available for the non-profit Lamorinda Spirit Van. Call Mary Bruns for more information at (925) 284-5546.



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