

Marechal Duncan – the heart of Lafayette history



Photo provided

Marechal Duncan at the Historical Society in February 2019.

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette lost a beloved member of the community with the recent passing of Marechal Duncan at age 98.

It wasn't just that his many years of volunteerism, benefiting many different organizations have made the community a much better place, although they have, but it is the man himself – his wit, his charm, and his humor – who touched so many lives, that so many will miss.

“Marechal enlivened every event he organized and attended, and that included a large number of events,” says Former Mayor Don Tatzin. “With a calm manner, Marechal earned the fondness and commanded the respect of citizens because he knew what he was talking about, brought good ideas, and was kind and courteous to everyone.”

Duncan was recognized for his many areas of community service by being named Lafayette Citizen of the Year in 2015.

Born in 1922 in Massachusetts, at 1 year old he moved with his family to San Diego, where he grew up, joining the navy following his high school graduation. After Pearl Harbor he served in the Guadalcanal campaign. He earned numerous medals and citations including three Bronze Stars.

Duncan attended the University of California at Berkeley and later earned an MBA from Pepperdine University. He went on to work for several companies including Motorola for 28 years.

He married Doris Paulson in 1947, and together they moved to Lafayette in 1955, buying a house in the Silver Springs neighborhood. He threw himself into community involvement, serving as an LMYA coach, and a Scout

leader with Troop 204 while their children were young.

He was a founding member of the Lafayette Community Foundation where he established the group's Liaison Committee for Seniors. A true history buff, with a love for Lafayette's historic fire truck Old Betsy, he served from 1991 until 2019 on the Lafayette Historical Society board, and he co-chaired the Lafayette Sesquicentennial celebration. Additionally he was a founding member of the original Lafayette Toastmaster's Club and was a past president of the Silver Springs Homeowners Association. He was a member of SIRS Branch 8 and a Master Mason. Duncan served on Lafayette's Open Space Task Force and the Senior Needs Assessment Committee.

“Marechal was the embodiment of what it means to Love Lafayette,” says Mary McCosker, executive director of the Lafayette Historical Society. “During his life he was involved in so many activities that benefited so many parts of the community.” And McCosker adds that he was always such a charming, friendly person with a dry sense of humor and a twinkle in his eye.

Former Mayor Anne Grodin who was, with Duncan, one of the founders of the Lafayette Community Foundation, explains how Duncan became involved in an ad hoc committee formed back in 1997 to brainstorm ideas for a new library.

“The Historical Society had long wanted a place to display all their historical artifacts but did not have the ability to raise funds to build and maintain a home of their own,” says Grodin. “By joining forces the two groups were the foundation of the movement to get a new library in Lafayette.”

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Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>