

**Note: In 2006, Al Leonetti celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a member of the Rotary Club of Morgan Hill.**

# Morgan Hill Times

## **Retired, but Not Forgotten**

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Morgan Hill doesn't forget its own.

Despite being relatively out of the lime light in the past few years, Alfred Leonetti was named as the Man of the Year after his long-time dedication to making Morgan Hill a better place to live.

Both Leonetti and his wife Bonnie had been runners up for the award, but both were previously passed over.

When he found out at the end of November about the nomination, Leonetti, a former mayor of Morgan Hill, was caught off guard. It was especially surprising because most of the people he worked with have long since passed away.

"I was completely dumbfounded and bewildered," Leonetti said. "When I retired in '89, I kind of lost touch with everyone. Not many people I worked with are still around. I still can't figure out why they voted for me."

"When we went out to give him the news he was floored, absolutely stunned," said Chamber Special Events Director Michele Naylor. "But he is well deserving."

According to the chamber nomination, Leonetti "...set the standard for leadership and community service and involvement in Morgan Hill."

Now with the pains of old age and multiple surgeries taking their toll, Leonetti has been forced to give up many of the things he enjoyed, including the game of golf.

But despite not being as active as in his younger days, Leonetti still finds time to keep a formidable garden at his San Martin family home. He still attends St. Catherine Church, which he helped build. He was the president of the first parish council there.

"Before, I always used to give my time," said Leonetti of his church involvement. "Now I just show up and give money."

**He also takes pride in being Morgan Hill Rotary's second longest member behind Bill Ruge.** Leonetti is a member of the Knight of Columbus and the Full-Blooded Italian club.

Leonetti served as the mayor of Morgan Hill from 1958-60 and served on the city council for four years as well. He was the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce president and served on the planning commission.

"This was my home, and I wanted to improve the area around me, creating a strong energy," Leonetti said. "It was so long ago, I don't remember much about it. I served my terms, and did it gracefully. I tried to be a gentleman. I wanted the city to increase its revenue, and I tried to create a stronger social life. I've always been looking for ways to improve life here. It

is always improving. I think it has turned out damn well."

As a business man, Leonetti owned the El Toro Shop for 39 years before giving it up in 1989 to spend more time with his wife. He also was the founder of South Valley National Bank.

Virginia Mae Days, also a former Morgan Hill mayor, has known the Leonetti family since moving here in 1949.

"I remember when we first came into town, we used to go to his shoe shop. He was always very friendly," Days said. "As mayor, he always stopped to talk to people in the street. He seemed to do his job OK. After he left the city council, he continued to be interested in city functions that were going on and maintained his friendliness."

Days, who also attends St. Catherine Church, said he respects Leonetti even when he is not in the spot light.

"He is a very good family man and is concerned about other people," Days said. "The entire family was always there ready to help and be involved in school functions and city functions. They were a very personable family and helpful."

John Sorci, a former council member and mayor, actually received his inspiration to run for office from Leonetti.

"He was my inspiration," Sorci said. "I told myself that someday I wanted to do it and serve my community that way. He said I was crazy to do it. He did so much with so little he had to work with. A lot of times he didn't have the support on the city council. Sometimes his friends were not friends."

But a big heart kept Leonetti going, Sorci said.

"Just being in business for as long as he was will show you what type of person he is," Sorci said. "He ran that store well. They put 100 percent into the community and loved the community. Someone told me many years ago that his time would come and that time has come. He deserves it. It's too bad Bonnie, couldn't be here. But I'm sure she is watching from above."

Before Leonetti's wife died in 2004 after battling Alzheimer's, the couple was actively involved in Morgan Hill.

"All we did was go to meetings, meetings, meetings," Leonetti said. "We'd see each other on the go. There was always something. That was when I was working 60 or 70 hours a week. We were always supportive of each other. She encouraged me, and I encouraged her. Overall it was worth it. I have no regrets. I wouldn't change a thing."

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