

I first met Governor Deukmejian while a staffer in the State Senate. I later gained a better understanding of him while he was Governor and I represented SCE in Sacramento. I developed a relationship with him after I became Mayor of his City.

What I most remember is the feeling of comfort when with Governor Deukmejian. You felt relaxed, accepted, and he listened to what you said. You could not help but feel affection for him. He was a good, decent, and honorable man who viewed himself as ordinary, but he did extraordinary things.

I will miss him and the City he loved will miss him.

Deukmejian represented Long Beach in the Legislature for more than 16 years. George Deukmejian was perfect for Long Beach and The City embraced him as its representative. The Governor was from the small town of Menands, NY and Long Beach is known as a big city with a small town feel.

I don't know what the Governor did while in Menands (population 3900), but he loved to stroll the streets in Belmont Shore, taking in the sites and people along Long Beach's most trafficked shopping and dining area. It was on 2<sup>nd</sup> street in Belmont Shore that George usually had his haircut, at the local barbershop probably much like one in Menands.

He would often stroll 2<sup>nd</sup> street trolling for ice cream, one of his passions. He would take long walks, through Naples and around Marine Stadium, and then over to the Bluff Park wearing large yellow headphones. I'm not sure if there is any truth to the rumor that he would listen to Iron Butterfly's In -A- Gadda-Da- Vida over and over again, but I want to believe it. (I so want this rumor, that I started, to be true.) He truly loved his adopted City and he appreciated that Long Beach embraced him with warmth and affection.

Gloria was a Long Beach native so she knew all the good spots for eating or entertainment. She and the Governor would often dine with their children at Hamburger Henry's, a restaurant now mercifully closed. Leslie their daughter would slip a plastic ice cube with a fly in it into George's drink and Henry the owner would always play along. It was the kind of thing you would expect in a small town.

George Deukmejian's adopted city welcomed him and embraced him warmly. He and Gloria raised their family here. He practiced law here. He entered public life here. It was a symbiotic relationship that benefited both parties but more importantly brought joy to both.

Now when you think of governor Deukmejian, you don't think of a wild and crazy guy. He was steady, serious, and diligent. However, he did have a well-hidden and well-honed sense of humor. I remember the groundbreaking of the George Deukmejian Court House held in a tent on site. The Governor moved to the lectern to speak and the first thing he says is, "you know they usually only name things like this for dead guys". Everyone laughed in no small measure because the humor was unexpected.

That day the wind was severe. Behind the lectern where the Governor was still speaking, the tent poles were coming out of the ground and threatened to collapse the tent. Alan Lowenthal and I run up behind the Governor to hold the poles down and prevent a serious issue. The Governor turned around and looked at us and then turned to the audience and said, "it gives me great comfort to know that these two democrats have my back". Again the audience roared with laughter.

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The Governor continued his engagement in public issues long after he left office. During my tenure as Mayor I had several occasions to call on him and ask for his advice and support. Knowing the Governor's penchant for great restaurants, we had many a meal at Taco Surf on 2<sup>nd</sup> street discussing city issues.

He supported my efforts to change the City Charter and my attempt to develop a fund for infrastructure enhancement. He also supported my run for a second term as Mayor, and he and Gloria were the first signatures on my candidate papers submitted to the City Clerk. They were the kind of people you always wanted as an ally, and they were always willing to help.

Perhaps one personal story will help illustrate the character of Gorge Deukmejian. On the occasion of Willie Brown's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, a dinner party was to be held in Los Angeles. Besides being a sponsor, I was tasked by Mike Roos with making sure that Governor Deukmejian attend the event for Willie. The Governor agreed and I said I would drive him to the event in Los Angeles. This event, on a Saturday, was on my calendar for months.

However, a few days before the event my wife Nancy ask me if we were busy on the weekend and if we could drive to Bakersfield to celebrate her mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Without looking at my calendar I said sure.

So fast forward to Saturday, I'm in shorts and a tee shirt in Bakersfield and I get a call in late afternoon and the caller ID is Governor Deukmejian. I freeze and immediately know I'm in trouble. The Governor wants to know if I'm still picking him up for the event that evening. I stammer and say yes but let me call you back. I then call Roos and tell him there is no way I can get to Willie's party but that I will get the Governor there. He calls me an idiot. I agree.

I then call the Governor back and tell him I screwed up but I will have a driver pick him up, wait for him at the party, and then drive him home. He argues with me, saying he will drive himself. I cannot let this happen. I know George feels like he is causing me undue obligations. Hoping to strike a cord with his sense of justice, I say Governor "you need to let me correct my mistake and make this right. I need to do this." He immediately understood and agreed. So several hours and \$550 later he attended the party.

But as we all know he was also a serious person. He was committed to public safety and fiscal discipline. He was a moderate to conservative Republican but he was also an empathetic man and a clear thinker. Others today will recount his successes in state policy and the achievements of this tenure as Attorney General and Governor. We miss his brand of politics in our state today.

He was not an ideologue with a knee jerk reaction to issues and a pat answer to every policy question. If something was wrong or unjust he would try to correct it, whether or not it was the "correct conservative behavior".

Mike Roos, former Speaker Pro Tem of the Assembly recently made this point; "show me a Republican office holder today who would sign the assault weapons ban and also sign the bill to end California's investing in South Africa under Apartheid." You would be hard pressed to find one.

Here was a man who would walk his own path; seek to redress a wrong; try to keep our citizens safe; and despised oppression. Nelson Mandela credited California's action with helping to push

Eulogy by Robert Foster Given at the Memorial Service for Governor George Deukmejian on June 9, 2018

his nation toward racial integration, and end Apartheid. The Governor changed the world and made it better.

A man from a small town living in a big city. A man who loved where he lived and the beauty of the coast. A man who believed in public service and whose service was appreciated by those he represented. A man who enjoyed the simple pleasure of having dinner at an ordinary restaurant with his family and friends, or trolling for ice cream in the neighborhood.

**An ordinary man who did extraordinary things.**

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