

Resident vies for community

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The Explorer

Some might know Oro Valley resident Bill Adler as the recipient of Community Leader of the Year, or they might see him as a pot stirrer. Either way, the man, who earlier in his life had no real interest in politics or local government, has always had the town's best intentions in mind.

Adler spent his career in radio broadcast where he started out in sales in the 1960s. He slowly moved up and evolved to become a station manager and eventually a general manager. In 1969, he moved his family from Chicago to the San Francisco bay area, where he bought a radio station.

He focused on his radio station and the gift of imagination that it could give its listeners, while his wife took an interest in local government.

"She had a much more human interest in how government needs to serve communities," said Adler. "So she took an interest in county and the bay-area communities and became very involved in things that I found interesting but didn't have time to understand... until she died."

In 1985, Adler's wife was diagnosed with cancer, and in January of 1986, at the age of 49, she died. It was then that Adler decided he would try and do more of what she did and how she fulfilled her life making a difference.

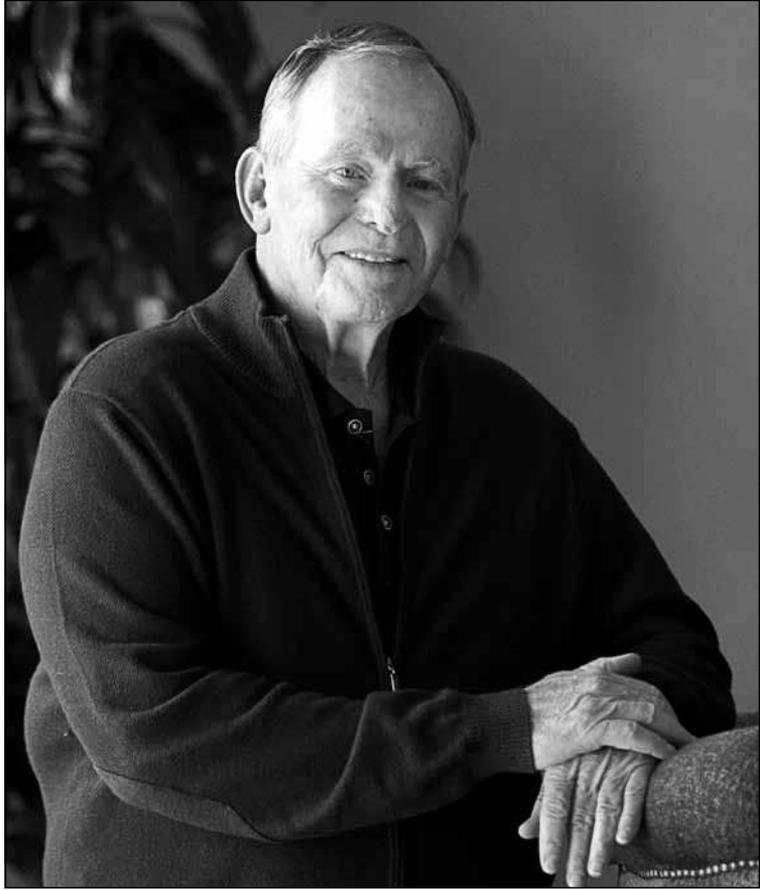
He said that having the radio station was a way to possibly make a difference in the community, but there was never a real way of knowing if he had actually made a real difference, whereas in taking an active roll in the community and being personally involved, he could.

"So, when she died, I decided to try to factor in more of what she represented into my life," said Adler.

And he did so when he moved to Oro Valley, where he saw the major tools used in building and growing a town – zoning codes and general plans – being used arbitrarily, discretionally and based upon gut-feelings, rather than using the pre-planned tools that had been formed and ratified publicly.

"So I pointed that out and I got the reputation of being sort of a trouble maker," said Adler.

But ultimately, Adler's intentions were for what was best for the com-



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Oro Valley resident Bill Adler, a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, regularly attends council meetings to voice his concerns.

munity and how to make the general plan and the zoning codes a more applicable tool, rather than simply an option when it was convenient.

In 1993 Adler was appointed to the Planning and Zoning Commission in Oro Valley, which led to a revision of the general plan in 1996.

"I wanted to move the pendulum from discretion to obligation," he said. "So rather than it being a discretionary tool, to it's an obligation to use this. Because I felt that is what the community expected."

In addition to having the town's government run expectedly, Adler made it a point to keep the public informed on what the governing bodies were doing. This was contrary to what he felt the mindset was in the town. He felt that if someone wanted to know something or be made aware of changes, they should be involved with town meetings and documents, whereas Adler felt that the town should be going out and letting the people in the community know about possible changes in their neighborhoods.

This became the next goal that Adler wanted changed with the way the town operated.

"I don't look at it as challenging

somebody," he said. "I don't want to challenge their integrity or their sense of purpose or anything like that. I am just saying, who speaks for the future? Who speaks for the community? Somebody has to speak for the future and the future residents."

Today, Adler feels the town is now operating in a fashion that is much more informative for the public and follows the guidelines laid out in the general plan and zoning, and feels satisfied when he sees a difference being made.

"If you're objective as a volunteer is to make a difference, those are results. It may not wind up the way I would like it to," he said. "But you're making a difference by initiating a provocative idea and if the idea doesn't result in exactly what you want, at least you moved the needle a little bit, and that is making a difference."

He added with a slight laugh, "I feel like I am making more friends than enemies, so, that's a good thing for me."

(Editors note: Bill Adler is a new resident at Splendido.)