

TED J. PORTER

Fontana's First Elected Mayor; Also Served on School Board and City Council

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Ted J. Porter had an extremely impressive community service record that spanned the 67 years he spent in Fontana. In all, Porter spent 28 years as a public official, including 16 years on the City Council (nine of those as mayor) and 12 on the Fontana Elementary School Board.

"He was proud to be mayor and very honest," said his daughter, Diane Schaub. "He was always working for the good of the community."

Born in 1897, Porter came to Fontana in 1927 after graduating from Oregon State University. In that same year he married his first wife, Doris Lake, who was also an OSU graduate. Porter was a loyal supporter of OSU's football team throughout his life.

For nearly 30 years, Porter worked for the Globe Milling Company, which was eventually bought out by Pillsbury. As a chicken feed salesman, he was able to travel all over Southern California. He became particularly fond of the local mountain ranges and enjoyed working outside in the fresh air.

Doris Porter worked as a pharmacist at Crawford's Drug Store on Sierra Avenue, and the couple's daughter (who now resides in Oregon) followed in her parents' footsteps by also graduating from OSU.

"He was a good daddy," said Schaub, recalling her youth. "He would come home from work and we would play basketball together."

Fontana Elementary School Board

Because of his interest in helping young people, Ted Porter decided to run for the Fontana Elementary School Board in 1943. He won a seat and continued serving faithfully on that board until it disbanded in 1955, dedicating his spare time to making sure the local elementary schools ran efficiently.

Starting in the early 1920s, Fontanans created this elementary school board to oversee the workings of the schools for young students. At that time, the Chaffey Joint Union School District oversaw Fontana's junior and senior high schools. (In 1955, the Fontana Unified School District was formed, covering grades K-12.)

A.J. Willhoit served as the superintendent of the Fontana Elementary School District during its last six years and knew Porter very well both professionally and socially. "His main emphasis was always on saving money," said Willhoit. "He didn't want to spend a single penny more than was necessary. He was



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Ted J. Porter (center) was first appointed mayor in 1964. This photo from that year shows Porter and the other councilmembers and city staff.

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always upfront and honest.”

Porter decided to retire from his job in 1956, and in that same year, he became a widower when his wife of 29 years died. Now single and retired, he turned his attention to the Fontana City Council.

Fontana City Council and Mayor

Porter received the most votes of any of the 13 candidates for City Council in 1958. He was elected to a four-year term along with Kenneth Sufficool.

Porter was reelected in 1962, and in 1964, the council appointed him mayor, making him Fontana's fifth mayor. He was again elected to serve a four-year term on the council in 1966. He served as Fontana's appointed mayor from 1964-1967 and 1968-1970 (Nathan Simon was mayor from 1967-1968).

In April of 1968, Fontana voters passed Measure A, which stipulated that starting in the 1970 election, citizens would vote and elect a mayor directly, while still voting for four city councilmembers. So in 1970, Fontana held its very first mayoral election, and Porter received 1,973 votes to edge out his lone opponent, Simon, who had 1,870 votes. Thus Porter earned the distinction of being Fontana's first elected mayor, serving in that capacity until 1974. Altogether, Porter was Fontana's mayor for more years than any other person except Simon.

Porter was only on the City Council a short time when his attention turned to Peg Wade, who was a secretary for the city. The two were married in February of 1961. At that time, Ted had been a widower for five years and Peg had been a widow for 18 years. Like Ted, she also had one daughter (Joanne). They had no children together.

“When I first met him, I had no idea who Ted Porter was,” said Peg Porter, who was unaware of her husband's prior community service and status in the community. “Being on the City Council was a challenge to him. He was always the man who wanted parks.”

The Porters remained happily married in Fontana until Ted passed away in October, 1994 at the age of 97. Peg Porter now resides in New Mexico in order to be close to her brother.

Also in 1994, FUSD named and dedicated a school in honor of Ted J. Porter. At the time of the dedication, he was in the hospital and his family attended the ceremony. He died before he ever was able to see the school.

Ted Porter remained active in Fontana throughout his years as a councilmember and mayor. In 1956, he started a second career in real estate. He sold the property for the original Fontana Square on Foothill Boulevard. He was an extremely loyal member of the Fontana Rotary Club, where he never missed a meeting for nearly 50 years. Porter was also past commander for the Fontana American Legion Post.

In his spare time, he enjoyed going to the horse races with friends like Rudy Gazvoda and Michael Micallef. He was also an avid poker player and competed regularly with Morris Meade, Ray Lund, Gib Laurie, Willhoit, and others.

In addition, Porter was a huge fan of Fontana High School's football team. “Ted loved the town of Fontana, and he was one of the most loyal and dedicated people for our football team,” said Dick Bruich, the former Fohi coach. “He never missed a game. We named one of our player awards after him.”

For his nearly three decades of public service and his devotion to Fontana, Ted J. Porter certainly deserves a place among this city's list of Century Contributors.