

# Morgan Hill Times

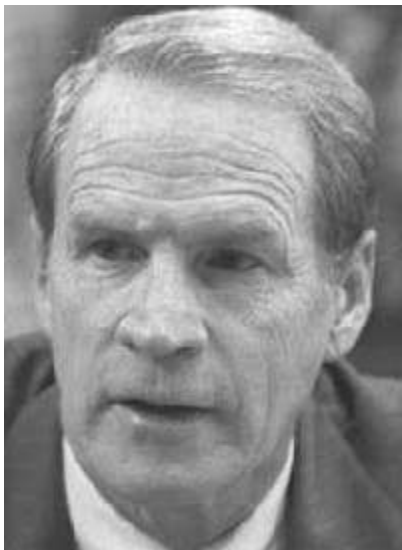
*NOTE: Article profiles three Morgan Hill Rotarians: Dennis Kennedy, Roger Knopf and Steve Tate. It also profiles Steve's wife, Jennifer Tate, all of which are included in this excerpt.*

## Ten to Watch

Our top 10 people picks for Morgan Hill as it transitions into a new century are those who have served the community with hours of intense labor and love to make it a better place to live. We tip our hats to them and give them a hearty salute for their contributions.

**Friday, November 10, 2006**

Freelance writer Angie Young contributed to these profiles.



### **DENNIS KENNEDY**

"Mr. Morgan Hill" is stepping down as mayor of the Mushroom City on Dec. 6. Replacing him will be Steve Tate, a former city councilman who's admitted he'll have big shoes to fill once he takes the city's helm.

Kennedy, 68, is a Midwesterner with a gentle voice who worked at the helm along with his fellow civil servants in the City Hall chambers for five two-year terms and a appointed year-and-a-half term totaling nearly 12 years as mayor. When Kennedy wasn't dealing with tough issues at city council meetings, he was out in the open mingling with the local artists at fine art exhibitions, supporting the athletic community by attending and serving at the South Valley Wine Auction hosted by Jon Hatakeyama and his team, being present at the premier Poppy Jasper Film Festival and subsequent ones thereafter, shopping at the local stores and feasting on the variety of culinary delights from the city's plethora of restaurants. He made sure he put his money right back into Morgan Hill's economy. This mechanical engineer originally hailed from Nebraska loves the outdoors playing volleyball, skiing in water or snow, and hitting a few links out on the golf course whenever he can escape the pressures from his job.

Kennedy and his family moved to Morgan Hill in 1976 whereupon he dove into politics a year

later. He did three stints with the city planning commission, two terms with the General Plan Update Committee, and was elected to the City Council in 1990. He was the past chairman of South County Regional Wastewater Authority and additionally served four years on the Board of Directors for the Valley Transportation Authority. He was president of the Santa Clara Cities Association too. In 1992, he served his first term as mayor and didn't return to sit on that seat again until 1996. Kennedy's aspirations for higher political began in 1994 when he ran for state assembly and then again in 2002 when he ran for the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. After these unsuccessful attempts for higher office, he once again ran for re-election in Morgan Hill and voters re-elected him two more times even against the well-liked City Councilman Greg Sellers in 2004.

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### **ROGER KNOPF**

Part of what makes Roger Knopf, 65, a tenacious hard working leader and volunteer is his upbringing. He grew up on a 13-acre family property in the Los Gatos hills along with his brother and sister. The Knopf children were taught the priceless model of work ethics even at an early age. The Knopf family owned horses, and livestock, Knopf helped raise lambs and steer for show at the Santa Clara County Fair. Outside of work, he and his siblings hiked, hunted and camped in the pristine South Bay land. Fast forward to 1964 when Knopf and his new bride Janie moved to Morgan Hill to farm prunes on family property off Watsonville Road. The town was bursting with 4,000 people by then.

Knopf is one of five people responsible for fashioning the Morgan Hill Community Foundation, an umbrella organization that enriches the South Valley area through granting financial assistance to non-profits. The foundation links people and resources to create a much better Morgan Hill. Knopf is the president of Knopf Construction, Inc., located in Mushroom City Morgan Hill since 1976. He's been a general building contractor in the community since 1970. He is one of the founding directors of South Valley National Bank. He served as president of the Santa Clara County Landowners Association and Rotary Club of Morgan Hill. He has served on several ad-hoc county planning committees. He also served as a member of the Morgan Hill Unified School District Personnel Commission, which oversees management of classified employees. He chairs the city's Corporation Yard Commission and is also presently the chairman of the board of trustees of Regional Medical Center of San Jose.

Knopf volunteers to help maintain the 1886 Hiram Morgan Hill House. Back in 2003 when Knopf received the Morgan Hill Leadership Excellence Award from the Leadership Morgan Hill, someone asked him why he spent the last 30 years serving as a committed volunteer for the community. His reply was: "It's fun. Everyone is different. In my case, I developed an interest in my community from growing up in a small town community; myself in Los Gatos and Janie

(his wife of 42 years) in Saratoga. If you get involved in one thing there is more involvement by the whole community and it's stronger. Otherwise it's just a place where people live."

He earned the prestigious Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year Award in 1989. Another amazing thing Knopf did between work, volunteering and family is finishing a 26.2-mile race, the Las Vegas Marathon in 2002 in 4:24, and he was 62 years at the time. With Councilman Steve Take, Knopf co-chairs the Centennial Project Committee, appointed by their wives who are spearheading the Centennial Committee overseeing the Centennial Celebration today.

Their children, David & Carrie and their families live in Morgan Hill.

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**JENNIFER TATE**

The indomitable public servant who is the president of the Morgan Hill Centennial Committee is also the wife of Morgan Hill City Councilman, now Mayor-elect Steve Tate. The 61-year-old mother of two has lived in this city for 29 years. She has always doing something for someone through countless historical or civic-minded events.

Tate won the Gavilan College Spirit Award in 2005 for her volunteer work including but not limited to the Morgan Hill Rotary Club and the Morgan Hill Historical Society of which she is co-president. In addition to these activities, Tate has coordinated in the past the annual Founders' Day dinner, a swanky and fun affair that venerates founders who have lived in Morgan Hill for more than 50 years.

This year, the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce named her Woman of the Year. An admirer who nominated Tate wrote: "She is an active member and officer in many organizations and also volunteers her time for some for whom she is not a member. If she accepts a job you can count on Jennifer to get it done. She leads by example and has fun doing it."

A partial list of Tate's affiliations and accomplishments include being chairperson of the Founders' Day Dinner for several years, co-chair of the first all-night Grad Party for Live Oak High School, Nordstrom Elementary School Site Committee chairperson, Morgan Hill Community Foundation Logistics Chairwoman for the mayor's ball, St. Catherine Church Reach Out Program, two-year terms as chairperson of Leadership Morgan Hill's Leadership Excellence awards dinner, past trustee of the Morgan Hill Unified School District board of education and former president of the Morgan Hill Chapter of Children's Home Society. Tate owned a

downtown business for 11 years - the Morgan Hill Seed Company. She's now a personal trainer at Fitness Formula.

She holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology from University of California-Davis.

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### **STEVE TATE**

This lanky, physically fit council member with the ceaseless sunny disposition is the new elected mayor of Morgan Hill. He is someone to watch as we enter a new century. He served has served two four-year terms as a member of the Morgan Hill City Council. Both he and his wife, Jennifer, are an integral part of the Morgan Hill Centennial celebration. Tate is always leading fundraising events, attending a local art show or listening to the heartfelt pleas of fellow citizens. Tate has lived in Mushroom City since 1977 fulfilling his role in the managerial facet of IBM dealing with marketing and planning. Since then he left the computer giant and devoted more of his time to the city he loves. His adult children live in Gilroy and San Francisco and have families of their own. Daughter Stacy was educator of the year in Gilroy in 2005 and, coincidentally, his daughter in law, who is married to his son Greg, is named Jennifer Tate.

He is a member and past-president of the Morgan Hill Rotary Club, fierce supporter of youth leadership in the Rotary Club, member of the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce (via ambassador program) and the South County Democratic Club. Tate just completed his second year as the president of the Leadership Morgan Hill board of directors and was appointed in 2006 to another board of directors of the Housing Trust of Santa Clara County.

Adding to his credits is his faithful service to the County Library Joint Powers Authority (JPA) board, the city and Morgan Hill Unified School District Liaison Committee and the Santa Clara County Emergency Preparedness Council. If that isn't enough, Tate also works closely with the Youth Advisory Committee and the Library, Culture and Arts Commission as a liaison from the council.

Outside the political arena, Tate loves running and completed 15 marathons plus a 50-miler commemorating him reaching the half-century mark in 1994. He loves sports and is a Giant baseball fan; he watches the games at AT&T Park in San Francisco. He and Jennifer travelled to Scottsdale, Ariz., every March to watch the Giants play at spring training camp. Tate manages to sneak in a few precious moments now and then reading fiction while he and his wife are away from the demands of public life.