



Ashland mural set for Guanajuato

By Kernan Turner Amigo Club

Posted Dec 19, 2017 at 12:01 AM

Preparations are underway for painting a mural of Ashland on a wall of its sister city, Guanajuato, Mexico.

Kathryn and Barry Thalden were in Guanajuato last week, meeting with city officials on the details. The Thaldens coordinated and sponsored the Guanajuato mural in Ashland, painted last year on a Calle Guanajuato building by Mexican artist Laura “Loreta” Rangel Villasenor.

The Guanajuato City Council (Ayuntamiento) gave its approval on Nov. 30 for painting the mural of Ashland on the Paseo de Ashland at its intersection with the main entrance to the city.



Early Amigo Club members Leo and Marianne vanDijk celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with 40 members of their family. [vanDijk family photo]

Sister City activists celebrate 60th wedding anniversary

Ashland residents Leo vanDijk and Marianne Oehrlein met in 1951 in the chemistry lab at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where Leo was studying pre-veterinary medicine and Marianne pre-nursing.

They celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at a Central Oregon resort this year, surrounded by 42 family members, among them all eight of their daughters, 14 of their 16 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Two more great-grandchildren have been born since the gathering, and a third is expected in January.

Leo and Marianne were among the early advocates of Sister City relations with Guanajuato, Mexico, and remain active members of the Ashland Amigo Club, founded in 1969.

They were married on Nov. 30, 1957, in New Rochelle, N.Y., and left the East Coast for Oregon in 1959 with their first child, Kathryn. Their other seven children, all daughters, were born in Oregon.

Leo and Marianne provided the following information:

“A lifetime-interest in Latin American relations probably goes back to when Leo was 10 years old. Although born in Holland, he was living with his parents and two older brothers in an oil camp in Maracaibo, Venezuela.

“Arrived in the U.S.A. by Pan American Airway clipper ship (passenger seaplane) in Miami Bay during the war in 1943.

“We took an early interest in Ashland’s relationship with Guanajuato, fostered by Mrs. Chela Kocks’ enthusiasm ... and we joined several other people ... to form the Amigo Club to foster the friendship ties between the two cities.

“Our daughter Kathryn was on the first Queen’s Court to represent Ashland at summer festivities in Guanajuato. Two of her younger sisters followed in her footsteps later.

“The (Guanajuato) bonds grew: We had a large ‘Party House’ on Jackson Road and ... (hosted) many important Guanajuato dignitaries and students and share lasting friendships. Dozens of exchanges resulted.

“We moved from Connecticut to Oregon in 1959 and settled in Ashland in the vacant Litwiller Mortuary building near the plaza in 1960. Leo practiced large and small-animal veterinary medicine until 1990, during which time he was involved in the Chamber of Commerce (president 1964), the Lions Club (60 years), high school and college activities and foundation. Years ago, Leo taught survival English one

or two evenings a week to migrant farm workers, and Marianne visited the camps as a nurse-educator.

“Marianne worked part-time for many years, starting in the old hospital on Siskiyou Boulevard, where Southern Oregon University’s Stevenson Union stands today. Besides being mother to eight daughters, she was involved in many activities, including the PTA, Tudor Guild (president), American Association of University Women, Food Bank, and Meals on Wheels. Her many phases of nursing were capped by her love for Hospice Care for 20-plus years.

“Early retirement allowed many trips to Mexico (25, three to Guanajuato), Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala (language school), and to Leo’s roots in Holland.

“We’ve spent winters in Palm Desert for more than three years.

“We hopefully will attend the big celebration in Guanajuato in 2019, (the 50th anniversary of Sister City relations with Ashland).”

— *Amigo Club’s Entre Amigos (Between Friends) column about Ashland ties to its sister city Guanajuato, Mexico, appears on the third Tuesday of each month. Longtime AP reporter and bureau chief Kernan Turner is an Ashland resident and Amigo Club member.*