

LARIMORE: Rogers Gallery Owner Poised On Leading Edge For Women In Business, Local Growth

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of Bentonville. Larimore has four grandchildren.

After graduation from Alamo High School in Alamo, Tenn., she obtained a bachelor of arts degree in business administration from the Memphis Academy of Arts.

Her work with Holiday Inns of America brought her to Northwest Arkansas and Larry Larimore in 1965. He was a general contractor and she an interior decorator.

"I didn't plan on staying ... we didn't get along too well at first. We later shared a joke that the country boy took advantage of the city girl, and the city girl took advantage of the country boy."

Larry Larimore's love of Rogers captured her interest. He discussed how wonderful Rogers and Northwest Arkansas were. But Larimore recalled that she had been a smart aleck and questioned him on whether he was working for the Chamber of Commerce.

He told her that everyone was a part of the Chamber of Commerce here. She also became sold on Rogers and married him in 1966.

Joe Spivey, vice president for business development at First Security Bank in Rogers, considers Larimore one of the reasons he became involved in the community.

"I knew Nita and Larry when I was a child, and when I moved back to Rogers, they encouraged me to become involved in the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary.

"Nita has always been involved in helping other people and building business to support the Rogers community. I have always admired her for her spirit and enthusiasm," Spivey said.

Founding the Rogers Junior Auxiliary and creating the Miss Rogers Pageant, now Miss Lakes of the Northwest, are just a few of her accomplishments, Spivey noted.

"One thing I like about Nita is that she is straightforward — there's no gray area. Nita is one of those high-energy, positive people. She reads people well and has a real can-do spirit. She sets an example for women of all ages," he said.



MARC F. HENNING • THE MORNING NEWS
Nita Larimore talks about her experiences as a businesswoman in Northwest Arkansas during a recent interview at her home.

Sharing The Vision

When Larimore first moved to Rogers, it had a population of 5,000. Larry Larimore used to frequent Lakeside Restaurant ... everyone knew everyone, she said.

"It was such a friendly town. And when I moved into this house in Rogers, everyone was so nice to me."

Another aspect of Northwest Arkansas life that Larimore said impressed itself on her is everyone here is loyal to the same team: the Razorbacks.

Her late husband was a quarterback for the University of Arkansas and a member of Sigma Chi fraternity. He was friends with UA alumnus and Rogers resident Dick Trammel.

Larimore went on to form Garner-Larimore Construction Co. A few of his projects include Rogers landmarks like the Daisy Manufacturing Plant, First Christian Church and the first Wal-Mart store, where Shelby Lane Mall is located.

Nita Larimore struggled not to cry when recalling Trammel's

kindness at her husband's funeral. Trammel, a former UA cheerleader, had a Razorback figure with him at the podium that played the fight song and called the Hogs when pressed.

Trammel wanted to put something of significance on Larimore, so he placed a Razorback pin on his friend's attire, she said, smiling though her tears.

Larry Larimore was one of the founders of Rogers, Trammel said.

"He had the vision to bring new people to our community. Larry was a wonderful friend ... I really appreciated his honesty and character. He was a pillar of the Rogers community."

Trammel knew Larry and Nita since 1975. He recalls that Nita was the personality of the couple, and Larry was more laid back.

"Nita has always been a fun person and giving of her time and talents. She is also a successful business lady and continues to be a leader in the community, always there with a smile, making new friends. Larry and Nita have meant a lot to me and

my life in Rogers."

Like her husband, Larimore immersed herself in the Rogers community and continued to lend her support. She has been chairwoman of the Rogers Advertising & Promotion Commission since its inception five years ago and is the vice chairwoman this year.

The group's purpose is to get people into Rogers, especially on the weekends, and boost revenue for hotels and businesses. Part of this initiative involves encouraging people to think of Rogers as a destination with a lot to offer, she said.

Gaining membership into Rogers Noon Rotary was a tradition she upheld, because a Larimore always had belonged to the club, she said. Like many other civic clubs, women once were not allowed to join. Larimore said she enjoys her club membership and plans to become even more involved in projects this year.

The new Northwest Arkansas Convention Center being developed by John Q. Hammons next to Embassy Suites of Northwest Arkansas is a major project for

Rogers that "will make a lot of money by hosting large events for Northwest Arkansans," Larimore said. She estimates the center's capacity of 1,500 to 2,000 guests will attract a multitude of the area's galas.

Much excitement is focused along the Interstate 540 corridor, but Larimore believes historic downtown Rogers is also a viable part of the region's future.

"Downtown is the lifeblood of Rogers. It's quaint, but it has a lot to offer. New businesses like the Belle Arti Ristorante & Steakhouse will continue to draw a lot of people."

Also, Larimore is a supporter of Rogers Little Theater and Mercy Health System of Northwest Arkansas. In fact, she hasn't missed a St. Mary's Charity Ball in all of its 12 years.

"Nita is someone who, because of her time in the community, sees the new, but also has a history of where this community has been," said Jerry Carmichael, founder of Parkway Bank in Rogers.

"She has been out there on the leading edge of positive growth. I have always enjoyed working with Nita and have found her to be courteous and professional. Since she moved here from Memphis, our community has benefited from her involvement."

Larimore said she enjoyed organizing style shows at the former Dixieland Mall, now Frisco Station Mall, because it gave local youths a chance to become involved. She also handled style shows as a Main Street merchant at the Frisco Festival.

Bethany Stephens, vice president of the Rogers A&P Commission, said Larimore is among the most impactful people in the Rogers community.

"Nita is vivacious. She is just an exceptional woman, exciting to be around, positive and supportive. She always has the best in mind for her community and the people she's around, and that is inspiring."

Pure Energy

While Larimore doesn't have immediate plans to retire, she may reduce her duties in the future, she said.

"God has blessed me with good health and lots of energy,"

Her plans include travel, which she loves. The last place she visited was the British Isles. The Larimores used to travel frequently, because Larry was a pilot. Her son is a pilot, and a grandson is studying to become one. The couple also traveled in a motor home.

Some of these travels are discussed as Larimore relates trip details and destinations during a tour of the home where she's lived for 40 years.

Another favorite Kinkadee painting is "Evening Majesty." It features a log cabin nestled among trees and sheltered from the world in its natural environment.

The painting reminds the gallery owner of travels with her husband and the good times they enjoyed in natural settings much like the one shown in the "Beginning of a Perfect Evening" series.

Goals for the energetic community leader are to continue in her civic pursuits. She decided to leave the Junior Auxiliary, after helping start it in 1969, when the women were the same age as her grandchildren, she said, laughing.

The work her group did throughout the years is a source of pride to Larimore. The auxiliary helped start Poplar House, now Tree of Life Family Center, directed by David Engle, Larimore's neighbor.

Other projects included providing learning opportunities when kindergarten was not compulsory. Also, she helped start the Adult Development Center at the Disciples of Christ Church.

Friend Jenny Riggs said she's known Larimore since they were charter members in the Rogers Junior Auxiliary. Riggs said her friend probably has served on every committee at Central United Methodist Church and has done everything she could to serve the community.

"Nita has such a wonderful way with people and is a great conversationalist. She knows how to present herself in any situation and fits in any place," Riggs said.

"She is just a great person. She is a wonderful hostess and holds great parties. Everybody loves Nita."

Sewing Retreat Slated Feb. 9-11

BUILDING QUILTS FOR LOVE TO HELP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

SPECIAL TO THE MORNING NEWS

ROGERS — Local Baby Lock sewing machine dealer B-Sew Inn invites the public and sewing enthusiasts to add a block to quilts during Building Quilts for Love, part of the Baby Lock Love of Sewing Retreat on Feb. 9-11 at Embassy Suites of Northwest Arkansas in Rogers.

All quilts created at the event will be given to women and children at the Battered Women's Shelter in Fayetteville. Guests of all skill levels can create and add their personalized blocks to the quilts between 8 and 10:30 a.m. Feb. 11.

The Battered Women's Shelter, part of Peace at Home Family Shelter, assists hundreds of women in Fayetteville and the surrounding areas each year.

"The Battered Women's Shelter does such good work for the women and families victimized by violence; we hope the public will join us to make blankets for

those in need right here in our own community," said Mary Hess, owner of B-Sew Inn.

Hosted by Nancy Ziemann, star of the PBS television show, "Sewing with Nancy," the Baby Lock Love of Sewing Retreat will offer guests the opportunity to attend professional sewing classes and a book signing, win giveaway prizes and go on an exclusive shopping tour.

"The art of sewing has been growing steadily over the past few years," Hess said. "Many who were afraid to try to sew or had a bad experience have found that sophistication and expanded capabilities of the new machines make sewing an enjoyable activity no matter what your skill level. We are looking forward to a big crowd."

For space at the Baby Lock Love of Sewing Retreat, including participation in Building Quilts for Love, call (888) 560-3227, ext. 106, or visit www.baby-lock.com.

FOR PETS SAKE: Nonprofit Organization Plans To Expand Service Area

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A few of the goals the duo shares for the organization are to raise awareness about animal care and fill a void.

"Some pets provide 100 percent companionship for seniors," Beckman said.

"Medicare and Medicaid do not provide for trips to the vet, so we are here to help with that need."

The Best Friends program fills this need by offering assistance for qualified senior pet owners. The program provides pet food for seniors on limited budgets, transportation assistance and assistance with necessary shots, up to \$50 annually.

So far, the assistance is available to seniors ages 65 and older in Springdale and Fayetteville.

Efforts will be made to serve other areas, including Benton County, as the organization grows, Beckman said.

"We just got two seniors requesting help from Best Friends, and we are so excited," Ray said.

Another component the women will implement is animal education. For example, preparing presentations in schools on topics like approaching animals, the correct way to do this, and avoiding animal bites.

Microchipping will be offered for about \$18. This involves inserting a tiny capsule the size of a rice grain under the flap of skin on the back of a dog's neck.

Veterinarians use a scanner to read a digital number identifying the animal.

Providing foster homes also will be offered through the organization. Beckman stressed that people willing to foster a dog will not be expected to keep it longer than two weeks.

Offering animals a foster home has several benefits, she said, such as analyzing the animal's personality traits. Also, youths in 4-H or Girl Scouts can achieve merit badges in animal care, Beckman said.

Part of growing the organization involves advertising and securing sponsors. Already, Petco has given For Pets Sake food and



COURTESY PHOTO
Smokey, a black pug, is one of the dogs that needs a home.

AT A GLANCE FOR PETS SAKE

For Pets Sake is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting animal welfare in Northwest Arkansas. Its mission is to find permanent homes for homeless and stray pets through fostering, starting a microchipping program for all adopted pets in the Northwest Arkansas area, aiding the elderly with pet expenses, raising public awareness about animal welfare and networking with other animal welfare organizations. For information, call 750-7171, e-mail forpetsake@hotmail.com or visit the Web site at for-pets-sake.org.



MARLA HINKLE • THE MORNING NEWS
Laurie Beckman shakes Maxwell Smart's paw.

ing: Help raise money and plan fund-raisers.

• Adoption follow-up calls: Call past adopters and report how their new pet is doing.

• Traveling pets program: Travel monthly for Pets Sake to various sites around the country, where cats and dogs from the organization are up for adoption.

• Inspectors: Travel to homes for inspection of those wishing to adopt or offer their homes for foster care.

One success story Ray likes to share is of Sparky/Humphries. The dog was dumped near woods and whimpered so loudly at night that a woman kept him in her garage until she could reach For Pets Sake.

When he was found, Sparky was thin, but gained weight after enjoying a good diet. Sparky's new owners renamed him Humphries, and he now has



COURTESY PHOTO
Sparky/Humphries dresses up for Halloween. The dog is one of For Pets Sake's best success stories.

some fellow dogs to play with.

Although the organization is new, several events have been planned. A dog wash will be in the summer, and an art event will be in 2007 with the Artist in Northwest Arkansas at the Arts Center of the Ozarks. The theme will be pets and pets with their people.

OUR TOWN

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