



Perris News

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Former Mayor Fatally Injured in Car Accident

Former Perris Mayor Lenwood Long was fatally injured Saturday morning when his car was struck broadside by a motorcycle near his residence in the City.

Mr. Long, 80, was driving his Honda east on Orange Avenue and was making a turn onto Kingman Street when the westbound motorcycle struck the passenger side of his car, causing it to roll over. Mr. Long died at Menifee Valley Medical Center about 40 minutes after the 11:21 am accident.

The driver of the motorcycle was identified as Rafael Casique, 23, of Perris. He died at the scene of the accident.

Mr. Long brought a lifetime of public service to his responsibilities as a Perris City Councilmember from 1993-1997, which included two years as Mayor.

Perris City Councilman Al Landers, who served on the City Council with Mr. Long from 1995-1997, remembered him as a man committed to doing the best for Perris residents.

Landers and Mr. Long served on the City Council together in 1996 when the City was grappling with financial insolvency. The City Council was forced to disband the Perris Police Department and contract for law enforcement services with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, eliminate many positions within the City and shutter City Hall one day each week.

"He helped make the extremely difficult decisions that saved our City," Landers said. "We did not always agree but we had a lot of respect for each other. I credit him with helping save our City from disaster."

Landers said he also knew Casique, who worked as a Realtor for him. He said Casique also worked at a local market to help support his family.

"He was a clean-cut young man," Landers said. "This is a double tragedy."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said that after Mr. Long left the City Council, he continued working on behalf of senior citizens. Mr. Long served as a Member of the California Senior Legislature and last month was reappointed to another term to the Riverside County Office on Aging Advisory Council.

"This is a sad day for the City of Perris," Busch said.

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said she saw Mr. Long recently at a function at a local church. He said he was pleased with the way the City was looking and happy to see the City Council working in unison to move Perris forward.

"This is a shocking tragedy," Rogers said. "We will greatly miss him."

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Mr. Long served during one of the city's darkest financial periods, when Perris' future hung by a thread. Mr Long helped return Perris to financial solvency.

"He served because he cared," Yarbrough said. "He made a difference."

Mr. Long served on the Perris City Council from 1993-1997. He served as Mayor Pro-Tem in 1994-1995 and served as Mayor from 1995-1996.

Mr. Long and his wife, Gola, moved to Perris in 1988. He retired from the Veterans Administration and spent nine years in the Marine Corps, including a stint as a drill instructor. He spent a total of 38 years in federal service to the U.S.

He was an avid bowler and camper and did not shy away from talking about personal problems in his life.

As Mayor, Mr. Long instituted a one-hour "work study" session before formal City Council meetings. He refused to tolerate personal attacks against City staff and worked to make sure that City Council meetings moved along in an orderly and timely manner.

Mr. Long received numerous awards from the City and other agencies for his work, including a 2009 Perris Annual Award for his work on behalf of the Dora Nelson African American Art and History Museum.

Funeral arrangements were pending Saturday night.



Lenwood Long (center) accepts an award on behalf of his work with the Dora Nelson African American Art and History Museum in 2009. Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley (left) and Perris Mayor Daryl Busch (right) flank Mr. Long.