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Perris Resident Sidney Lee Celebrates His 90th Birthday



Perris resident Sidney Lee grins as he descends to Earth while parachuting at Skydive Perris on Jan. 17 to celebrate his 90th birthday. He took part in the tandem jump with instructor James Perez.

Perris resident Sidney Lee celebrated his 90th birthday by visiting with family, chatting with friends and enjoying a breakfast of ham steak, sunny-side eggs and toast.

Then he jumped out of an airplane from two-and-a-half miles above terra firma.

Lee's posse of 15 friends and relatives watched him complete a tandem parachute dive at Skydive Perris, the world-class facility where elite skydivers from around the globe train and practice. The onlookers included Lee's two daughters, grand-daughter and great grandson.

Lee, a former king at the City of Perris annual Senior Citizen Prom, took all the attention in stride. January 17th wasn't the first time he completed a tandem jump attached to a professional instructor. He also jumped when he was 83 and 84 years old.

"I thought I would do it again," Lee said. "It's my birthday and I want to do something for fun! I like freefalling to Earth at 100 miles per hour. A lot of people think it's unwise, but I don't. I like it."

Lee's daughters, Nadia and Vera, grand-daughter Tacia Devries and great grandson Calvin Devries, snapped photos and chatted with him while he put on his blue skydiving uniform. Nadia jumped with her dad when he made his second skydiving in 2012.

Daughter Vera prefers life on solid ground, saying "I will be looking the other way" as her dad descended to the ground.

"I would never jump out of a perfectly good airplane," she said.



Sidney Lee prepares to take his third skydive at the world-famous Perris Skydive center. With him is great-grandson Calvin Devries, 6.

The Perris City Council on Feb. 13 honored Lee with a Proclamation celebrating his milestone birthday and, in public comments from the dais, lauded him for his adventurous spirit and for supporting many events at the Perris Senior Center. The proclamation also wished Lee "joy, love, laughter and peace of mind."

"You are an amazing man," Mayor Michael Vargas said.

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers placed the crown on Lee's head in 2015 and 2016 when he was named king at the Perris Senior Prom. She also noted that Lee wowed his fellow seniors when he took to the dance floor during the last three senior proms.

"Seeing you on the dance floor brought joy to my heart," Rogers said. "We honor you, we treasure you, we love you."

Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona called Lee a great story teller and an example that age should not diminish one's zest for life.

"It doesn't matter how old someone is, you can still do active stuff," he said.

From England to Germany to Minnesota to Perris



Sidney Lee is all smiles as he flashes the thumbs up he rides back from the landing zone at Skydive Perris after completing his third parachute jump.

Lee was born about 20 miles outside of London and joined the Boy Scouts as a youth. As a 12 and 13-year-old Scout, Lee was called upon to douse fires during the German blitz bombing of London in 1940-41.

"They dropped incendiary bombs which we put out with buckets of water," he said.

After World War II, Lee served as a ground-crewman for the Royal Air Force. While stationed in Germany in 1948, he met his wife, a Russian émigré named Luba (the name means love). Romance blossomed and the couple married.

"She was my Russian beauty," Lee said.

Upon returning to England, Lee drove a "lorry" (truck) delivering goods from the docks to the countryside. The couple left England in 1958 and moved to Minnesota where Lee worked as service technician for Sears, repairing washers and dryers. In 1988, the family moved to Southern California and Sidney and Luba Lee took up residence in Perris. His beloved wife died in 2002 after 54 years of marriage.

In the ensuing years, Lee has become a regular visitor and frequent participant at Perris Senior Center where he takes part in Valentine's Day, Father's Day, Senior Appreciation Day and the annual Thanksgiving and Christmas luncheons. He was named Prom King at the City's Senior Prom in 2016.



Perris City Councilwomen Rita Rogers and Tonya Burke, Mayor Michael Vargas, City Councilman David Starr Rabb and Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona with Sidney Lee at the Feb. 13 City Council meeting, where Lee was honored with a Proclamation.

Lee also stays active by volunteering as a greeter at the Menifee Valley Medical Center. Sandy Lynch, Iris Burger and Carol Lett, who volunteer with Lee at the hospital, were among those who came to the skydiving center to see his big drop.

"He's a wonderful people person," Lynch said. "He never meets a stranger. And he's a daredevil!"

The Jump

Lee took off from Skydive Perris in plane loaded with parachutists but he was the only tandem jumper so he and James Perez exited the plane first.

At 12,500-feet, ground watchers could not see the plane when Lee and Perez stepped out and began their several-minute descent. As the pair drifted into view under a rainbow-colored parachute, they completed a series of lazy twists and turns before making a soft landing.

Perez said Lee made it through the jump with flying colors. In 7,800 tandem jumps, Perez could recall only two people older than Lee.

Jules Johnson, the videographer who accompanied Lee on the jump, said of the descent: "It was great. We were just floating. There was a lot of wind."

Lee accepted the congratulations of his family and friends as he unharnessed from his parachute rig. He is already looking to the future and his next jump.

"I will be back when I turn 100!" he said.

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