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Council swears in a new member

Ralph Landreth has seat of late friend on Walkertown board

By Wesley Young

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WALKERTOWN

Ralph Landreth was still mourning the loss of his wife, who died last October, but in the end he could not say no to an old friend.

Landreth was sworn in last Thursday as the newest member of the Walkertown Town Council, taking the place of the late Horace Warner.

Before his death, Warner had confided to Mayor Doc Davis that he wanted Landreth to take his place on the council. Although the council was not required to honor Warner's suggestion, there was no dissent when the council picked Landreth last Thursday, and no other possible replacement's name was put forward.

Landreth, 79, said that Warner told him before he died that "he had some things he would like me to do."

"After he passed away, I got to thinking what did he really mean," Warner said. "I didn't know what. He told the mayor he wanted me to sit on the board."

Landreth went to elementary and high school with Warner. After he graduated from high school, Landreth joined the Navy. He served in the South Pacific on the USS South Dakota and took part in the invasion of Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

After the war, Landreth attended Brevard Junior College and N.C. State University, where he received a degree in mechanical engineering. He worked for Western Electric (later AT&T) for 36 years and retired in 1987. He married Virginia West and had four children. He joined the Lions Club and Morris Chapel United Methodist Church.

His wife died in 1995. He remarried in 1997 to Edith Doub Neal, who died Oct. 19, 2005.

Landreth said he never tried to run for office, although he was active in the Concerned Citizens of Walkertown, a group that has been active in the past two municipal elections.

But Landreth is no clone of Warner, who was regarded as one of the council's more conservative members. Nor does Landreth intend to vote on every issue the way Warner would have done. He said that Warner would have wanted him to "use my own intelligence" in deciding on the issues.

"We didn't necessarily have the same political views," Landreth said.

"But we both had the same desire to improve the town of Walkertown. Some of them thought he was too conservative. I don't know whether I'm as conservative as he was. I would probably be willing to spend more money for police protection and things like that, as long as it is for the betterment of the community."

- Wesley Young can be reached at 992-0067 or at wyoung@wsjournal.com