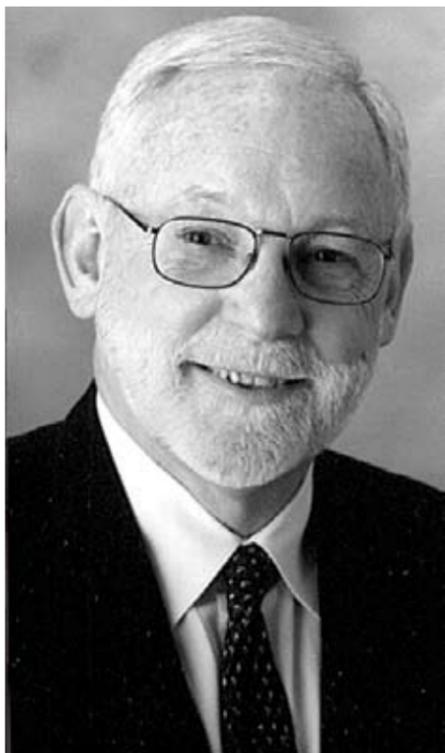


# PHIL SCHWARTZE: THE MAN WITH THE PLAN THAT HELPED SHAPE SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO



Phil Schwartz

BY MACKENZIE REISS

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Simply take a walk through San Juan Capistrano's open space, or note the ridgelines - unmarred by development tracts. You might fill a shopping cart at Costco or perhaps purchase a car from a local dealership. Such developments were the result of Phil Schwartz's vision when he first came upon this modest town of 4,000 in 1970. As city planner, and later, as mayor, Schwartz defined the borders of our parks and homes and governed the people inside the city of San Juan Capistrano.

Schwartz's journey to San Juan Capistrano began deep in the American south. Phillip, along with his brother and two sisters, grew up in the urban landscape of Springfield, Missouri. Later, the family relocated to Sherman Oaks, California. Upon graduation, Schwartz took a hiatus from academia and joined the Navy.

As a submarine Navigator, Schwartz found his bearings and charted the Pacific for three years, beginning in 1961. He toured Japan, the Philippines, and Hong Kong, but he was most at home in Australia." They spoke English and they loved Americans," said Schwartz. "We could not buy ourselves a drink in a bar."

While Schwartz and his crew reveled in these adventures, the less glamorous experiences underwater were equally rewarding. He shared quarters with approximately 120 crew members, and it wasn't unusual for the sub to submerge for two months at a time. Inside those metal walls, camaraderie was born.

After retiring from active duty, Schwartz stayed on as a weapons

and security officer in the Naval reserve for another 25 years. Even now, he maintains a line of communication with Navy comrades. Schwartz may have found his land legs but part of his soul is still at sea.

Once on the mainland, Schwartz gave college another go at Cal State Northridge. Phil plunged into his studies, applying his naval knowledge to astronomy and especially, geography classes. His aptitude for the subject caught the eye of a professor who pointed him in the direction of city planning - and Phil had found home." I just clearly saw what it was that I wanted to do," Schwartz said.

He was inspired by field trips to master-planned communities and earned his BS in Urban Planning. Later, Schwartz attended Cal State Los Angeles where he achieved a Master's degree in Administration.

With his education complete, in 1969 Schwartz headed south to answer a newspaper ad seeking a city planner for San Juan Capistrano. The council hired him as "the first trained city planner," recalls Schwartz. "They wanted to set up a master plan of trails, park systems, and other things while I was here."

Schwartz spent the next five years mapping out the city, in addition to pursuing projects in neighboring communities.

He lent his considerable skills to making plans for Anaheim, Costa Mesa, San Diego, and Mission Viejo, to name a few. The time spent in cities outside San Juan gave Schwartz a regional perspective when it came to city operations.

"To really get things done for this city, you've got to get involved in regional government," said Schwartz. And that's exactly what he did.

In 1978, with encouragement from then councilmen Ken Friess and Doug Nash, Phil Schwartz was elected to San Juan Capistrano's city council. He went on to serve three terms as mayor, for a total of 22 years of city service.

During his time in office, Schwartz was an advocate of open space acquisition and the diversification of economic assets. He brought in retail giant, Costco, as well as multiple car dealerships. Schwartz says the most difficult part of administering the

improvements were the battles he faced with individual civilian groups, who too often saw their own interests above those of the city.

"You need a broad spectrum of views," said Schwartz. "And you need a consensus at the end of the day, but what is key here is to be thinking of the City and not yourself."

"I had accomplished pretty much the things I wanted to accomplish," says Schwartz regarding his departure from city government in 1990. "We got the open space, we got the general plan implemented and we got a good economic base started with car dealers, with Costco. All the pieces were there. I felt very comfortable that others could certainly pick up the gauntlet and run with it."

"I'm a city planner-I think about how to make things better than they are now, how to improve our way of life. Everybody has to give a little. Time spent on minutiae, like signs

and fencing, might be better spent on the whole."

To further his contribution to the city he loves, Phil and his wife Marsha, teamed up with to found Capistrano Animal Rescue Effort (CARE) in San Juan Capistrano. What began with the discovery of one feral tabby has now blossomed into a self-sustaining organization that has raised more than \$800,000 and boasts over 50 active volunteers. CARE was founded in August 2000 in order to fill a vacancy in shelter and treatment for abandoned and feral animals.

"With the volunteers we have, we've been able to get over 1,100 animals adopted out to loving homes," Schwartz says.

Five former CARE kitties even found shelter at the Schwartz residence. The city has since donated a plot of land to house a formal adoption center for CARE. With funds raised at the annual CARE garden show and car show, Schwartz, hopes to make these plans, like so many before them, a reality. He still resides in San Juan where he often writes a column for the San Juan Capistrano Independent News.

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## CAR WASH ON JULY 26 FOR CITY'S ADOPTED MARINES

Members of the city's 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment (1/11) and the city's 1/11 adoption committee will host a car wash on July 26 to help benefit the Marines.

The car wash will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the parking lot next to the Camino Real Playhouse at the southeast corner of El Camino Real and Ortega Highway. The event will be environmentally friendly, as methods will be used to prevent runoff.

Folks can get their vehicles washed and help support the Marines by giving a donation in any amount. Proceeds from the day long event will help fund upcoming programs, events and more for 1/11 and their families.



Help support our Marines by getting your car washed this Saturday. Photo courtesy of KT Communications.