

FRIDAY EXTRA!

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Weekend Edition



KATHERINE LACAZE — EO Media Group
Gary Lewis, 69, has assumed the unofficial role of emissary for Avamere at Seaside (formerly Necanicum Village Senior Living) where he is a resident. Lewis often can be seen frequenting the sidewalk outside of the facility to brighten the days of passing travelers with a smile and a wave.

SEASIDE MAN SHARES

Assisted living facility resident shares memories from his years as football star, architect

A WAVE AND A SMILE

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
EO Media Group

If you have traveled along U.S. Highway 101 in south Seaside anytime during the past few months, chances are you've caught a glimpse of Gary Lewis doing one of his favorite pastimes: smiling and waving at passersby, or perhaps soliciting a honk from a fleeting truck.

On dry days, the 69-year-old resident frequents the sidewalk in front of Avamere at Seaside — formerly Necanicum Village Senior Living. It was recently acquired by the Avamere Family of Companies.

His mission to brighten the days of travelers has been quite successful, according to Avamere staff. They have received calls from multiple people expressing gratitude for the smile and wave they received from Lewis and, often, wanting to learn a little more about him. When he's not outside, fulfilling his unofficial role as emissary for the assisted living facility, people inquire if he's all right.

People who have been touched by Lewis' wave when passing by him on Highway 101 have thanked him for his kindness with gifts, such as a cake, hot beverages, a baseball cap and other items. But, as a social and thoughtful person, Lewis' primary goal is to make people happy, said Sue Spivey, director of health services.

"That reward is enough for him; anything else is like icing on the cake," she added.

Getting to know Gary

Lewis was born in Ohio in January 1946 to Francis Harvey Lewis Jr. and Gladys Katherine Title. He was a star quarterback on both his high school and college

football teams, and he participated in several other sports, such as basketball and track and field. Black and white photos of Lewis show him, as a younger man, donning his football uniform or wearing a letterman jacket.

He graduated from Ohio State University in the 1960s and soon after was drafted by the Army and went to Vietnam. He fulfilled a mandatory four-year military stint and re-enlisted for two more years. He wasn't injured and he doesn't feel he was psychologically impaired from the experience either. For his service, he re-

ceived a National Defense Service Medal; a Vietnam Campaign Medal; a Bronze Star Medal; a Meritorious Unit Commendation emblem and others.

He moved to Florida in his late 20s and lived there for about 30 years, during which time he designed dozens of buildings as an architect. His work spanned single- and multifamily dwellings, condominiums, commercial buildings, tennis clubs and more. His portfolio includes the World Tennis Center in Naples, Fla., and the Shipp's Landing Condominiums

in Marco Island, Fla. Lewis moved to Oregon about 13 years ago.

Lewis is an avid sports fan and he sticks to his roots by following the Cleveland Browns. He also has an affinity for the Florida manatee, which is evident through his many decorations, including a throw pillow and figurine, that depict the animal. He even has swum with manatees before, he said.

Sustaining a smile

Lewis suffered a debilitating stroke in 1980 that impaired his ability to speak except for a few words. His mind, however, is sharp and he has no problem comprehending and finding alternative ways of communicating. He has carefully preserved many aspects of his past in photographs, documents and other mementos, which he can refer to when sharing his story.

A family tree, for instance, links Lewis as a second cousin seven times removed to George Washington. His collection of keepsakes also includes a copy of Eddie Robinson's "Lucky Me," signed by the famous baseball player, and a book about Oregon that he received as a thank you for volunteering at Legacy Meridian Park Medical Center in Tualatin. Together, these and other personal items combine to create a portrait of who he is.

Others might have succumbed to an affliction that limited their speech and motion, but not Lewis, Spivey said. He maintains a cheery disposition and strives to be as independent as possible. He likes to dress nicely and be clean shaven. He doesn't struggle to assert autonomy — he's well-known and liked in and out of the facility, Spivey said. Other patrons and staff members described him as friendly, social and "a love."

"We're quite fond of him," Spivey said.



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A collection of photographs of Gary Lewis, a resident of Avamere at Seaside, through the years. Lewis is a former high school and college football quarterback and Vietnam War veteran.

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