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## **FAIRGROUNDS MANAGER RETIRES... SORT OF**

San Jose, CA – Clearing out the final items from his desk, longtime Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Executive Director Raymond Lueckeman looked back on 23 very interesting years. “I started in November, 1989, as Director of Operations becoming Deputy Executive Director and Fair Manager in 1998” Lueckeman recalled. In 2009 he was named Executive Director of the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Management Corporation.

Lueckeman’s path to fair management wasn’t necessarily conventional but his successes over a long career are many. After serving four years in the Air Force and another three in the Army he went to work in 1977 at the elections department for the county of Grays Harbor, Washington. He also did some work for the county auditor and it was from here that he was asked to go out and do something with the county fair. That first Fair was very successful with ten great years to follow. Then “I needed to seek new challenges so I moved to California in 1987 to manage the Salinas Valley Fair in King City” Lueckeman explained.

“I came to Santa Clara in 1989 when we were one of the largest Fairs in the state. Then I found myself part of a small determined group that just tried to keep the doors open as California Fairs in general declined.” Lueckeman quickly adds with a smile “And now I finish my career watching the rebirth of this very valuable county facility. We’re profitable, adding new anchor tenants and events, and embarking on a formal strategic plan that will transform the Fairgrounds into a regional expo center.”

“My greatest pride comes in helping hold this place together with many of the same staff members who are still here today.” Lueckeman countered that his only regret “Is that I won’t be around for the next ten years to watch the Fairgrounds flourish.” While Lueckeman has officially retired he won’t be disappearing. “I have agreed to stick around for a few years to finish up some of the exciting projects we now have under way” he said.

In retirement he plans to read, golf, fish and do some traveling, including a long anticipated trip back to Australia, a land he left shortly after his birth.

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