

Demoney mourned
Community leader served with many boards, chamber
By PAUL GAUNTT Daily Light staff writer

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The Waxahachie community is mourning the loss of leader and visionary, Chuck Demoney, who passed away in Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas at 1:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, with his wife Judy and a niece by his side.

Chuck and Judy Demoney retired in 1993 to Waxahachie, where he became owner of Gift Baskets, Etc. located downtown, as well as owner of the historic Hancock building. He immediately became involved in the community, leaving a legacy of devoted service to Ellis County and Waxahachie.

His long community service resume includes serving as chairman of the Downtown Merchants Association, co-chair of the Courthouse Centennial Celebration, Waxahachie Foundation president, Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce chairman, Waxahachie Rotary Club president, YMCA board member, YMCA Capital Expansion

Campaign chairman, YMCA Member of the Year – Dallas Area, Hope Clinic board member, United Way board member, Partners in Education board member, Ellis County SPCA – general contractor for the building of the facility and active member of First United Methodist Church and Builders Sunday school class. Demoney was also recipient of the Mabel Frame Award, presented at the annual chamber banquet for tourism-related efforts.

Born in Fairplay, Colo., on Jan. 18, 1939, to Charles and Alice Demoney, Chuck Demoney is survived by his wife of 28 years, Judy; daughters Jennifer Demoney of Phoenix, Ariz. and Autumn Garvin of Denver, Colo.; two sons, Jim of Phoenix and Chip of Belgrade, Mont. He is also survived by two sisters, Beverly Stewart and Connie Slaven of Denver; grandchildren, Kara, Jimmy, Sydney, Brooklyn, Jackie and Artur; great-grandchildren Tatum, Connor and Braiden; and also his beloved furry companions, Sophie and Sam. He was preceded in death by his parents and sisters, Betty, Mae, Anne, Verna and Frieda.

For 40 years, Demoney led a distinguished career in the airline industry, rising from the position of ramp agent with Frontier Airlines in Denver, to president and CEO of MGM Grand Air in Los Angeles, Calif.

Harold Barnard, director of Ellis County Abstract and Title Company, praised Demoney for his can-do spirit as he served the community. “He was always the nicest guy – the nicest you’d ever want to meet,” Barnard said. “He always went the extra mile at whatever he was involved in, even doing much of the physical labor whatever project he was involved with. He will certainly be missed.”

Barnard said the Demoneys built several houses in the community and he had worked closely with them through Ellis County Abstract and Title Company.

State Rep. Jim Pitts R-Waxahachie also weighed in on the loss of the noted community leader. “All of Waxahachie and Ellis County will feel the void left in Chuck’s passing,” Pitts said. “He and Judy were like a team when it came to community events and projects and, as a community leader, he was one that could always be counted on to get the job done. He was a great friend and will certainly be missed.”

Among some of the close friends of the Demoneys were J.D. and Peggy Atwell. “Chuck was one of the dearest friends of mine – he was like a brother to me,” Peggy said. “After J.D. passed away, Chuck was always right here to help me and Judy was such a big help to me too.

“I always admired him – he was such a smart businessman and I felt so privileged when they moved back to Waxahachie and took part in chamber and Rotary activities. This has really left a large void in our lives,” she said.

Elizabeth Sadler of Ellis County Abstract and Title Company and a long-time Rotarian, had worked closely with Demoney in the civic organization for many years.

“Chuck was a devoted Rotarian – he assumed several leadership positions and was very good – and he and Judy were always willing to open their home to the Rotary Club for various functions and activities,” Sadler said, saying Demoney was instrumental in involving the Rotary Club in the annual Waxahachie ISD reading initiative, Drop Everything and Read.

Long-time friends of the Demoneys, Ralph and Marion Reynolds, expressed their sadness at the loss of their close friend.

“Chuck was just very involved,” Marion said. “He was really a ‘doer’ and loved to help people – he was just a dear, kind friend. We took many wonderful trips with them through the years.”

In recent years, the Demoneys left Waxahachie and spent three years in Scottsdale, Ariz., but returned to Waxahachie.

Not only was Demoney involved in the community, he was an avid devotee to Navarro College.

“He was a great supporter and was quite a visionary,” said Dr. Harold Nolte, president of Navarro College. “He served for two years on the Ellis County Advisory Board of Navarro College and did an outstanding job. He was not only a great supporter of the college, but a great supporter to me personally.

“For someone who was not originally from Waxahachie, Chuck moved in here and became deeply involved in the community – he wanted to work to help make Waxahachie a good as it could be – he was a wonderful person,” Nolte said. “He was a man of few words, but when Chuck spoke, people listened. He was a leader among leaders – and he will be greatly missed.”

John F. Kelly, retired chairman, president and CEO of Alaska Airlines/Alaska Air Group weighed in on Demoney’s influence in the airline industry.

“Chuck was truly an aviation guy through and through — heart and soul. And he was that rare kind of guy who did it all, starting at the very bottom and working his way to the top as president and CEO of a number of airlines, including his last stint at MGM Grand Air,” Kelly said. “He accomplished that meteoric rise based on a combination of talent, determination and sheer will power. Whether it was operations, marketing, planning or good old-fashioned leadership, Chuck always led the way and was an inspiration to those who worked with him.”

Close friend Gloria Sullivan also commented on Demoney’s life and influence.

“I always depended on Chuck when I needed sound advice and he always could calm my apprehensions about anything. He is a good friend, who will never be replaced,” Sullivan said.

Former Waxahachie mayor and city council member, Joe Jenkins, hailed Demoney as an outstanding citizen of Waxahachie.

“He was very active downtown and was a very successful businessman in the airline business,” Jenkins said. “He was a real good friend.”

Jenkin’s wife, Jan, agreed.

“We became close to them through our Sunday school class at First United Methodist church,” she said. “He was always willing to work and was just a delightful person – he will be sorely missed.”

Demoney wrote a book about his family entitled “Fairplay.” A quote about his life was included on the cover: “The name of the town of my birth perhaps best describes the way the world has treated me. I consider my journey through life on this earth as both fair and blessed.”

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Tuesday, March 1, at First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie, with associate pastor Kevin Wilson officiating.

Funeral arrangements are with Wayne Boze Funeral Home.