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Efland native honored for service to county, state

Katie Jansen

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Ben Lloyd doesn't care much for the spotlight.

"I've never desired a spotlight for anything," he said. "Do what you can as well as you can, and be fair and honest in doing it."

The 85-year-old Efland native was recently honored with The Order of the Long Leaf Pine. The award comes from the governor's office and is given to those "who have a proven record of service to the state of North Carolina or some other special achievement."



The former Orange County commissioner acted as a spokesman for the rural part of the county.

"I agreed with what I thought was good for Orange County and I disagreed with what I thought was bad for Orange County," he said. "And I continue to do the same today."

Lloyd was a dairy farmer for most of his career. After serving in the Navy four years, he bought the farm on which he was raised from his father.

He oversaw the construction of a new state-of-the art cow milking facility, which increased milking capacity from 50 cows to about 150.

The political side of his career began after he attended a joint meeting between the Board of Orange County Commissioners and the planning board that focused on long-range planning for the county.

Lloyd said that at that meeting, someone from the planning board said that people in rural areas didn't have the expertise to weigh in on planning.

He decided to prove her wrong.

"It was never due to desire, but due to necessity, that I became a spokesman for rural conservation in Orange County," he said.

Once he was elected as a commissioner in 1982, Lloyd was disturbed to find the county didn't have enough money to meet the needs of its people.

Searching for suggestions, he called the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

Three representatives from the department visited Lloyd in Orange County, he said.

"I put them in the car and I rode them from Durham County to Alamance County showing them Orange County," he said. "All down 85, all down 70 and all the roads in between."

Lloyd said he was told that although Orange County had potential for economic growth, the regulations in Orange County prevented any potential development interests.

He said he is sad to see what he calls overregulation. He said that Orange County has been a "closed county" for about 30 years.

Development would bring jobs to the county, he said.

"We live in the best place in the entire world," Lloyd said of Orange County, citing access to education and medical facilities as two major benefits.

But, he said, there are problems with Orange County, which he calls “God’s little acre.”

“I know people that I’ve known all of my life who can’t afford to live here,” he said.

Lloyd said he’s been encouraged by some recent development he’s seen. He thinks the pendulum may be starting to swing in the right direction.

“There’s nothing wrong with regulations as long as they are implemented and enforced by reasonable, capable people,” he said.

Even after his term as a county commissioner ended in 1986, Lloyd continued to serve both his county and the state. In 1990, he was appointed by the General Assembly to be a member of the North Carolina Milk Commission.

He is also a longtime member of other community organizations. He’s been on the board of nonprofit Orange-Alamance Water System for 44 years. He was the first president of the Ruritan Club and has been actively involved in the Optimist Club.

Lloyd is a lifelong member of Efland United Methodist Church, and he assisted in the creation of the Efland Volunteer Fire Department.



In addition to farming, he has made a living through other small businesses, such as a service station, a car wash and a cattle insemination business.

“Any time one business is down, the other ones sort of hold it up,” he said.

Lloyd said he takes pride in the fact that in the 58 years he’s been an employer, he’s never had to fire anyone. He said he chooses his employees carefully.

He’s also a father of four and a grandfather of eight – and he’s expecting a ninth grandchild next month.

One of the main things he learned during his time as a commissioner, he said, was that “you can disagree without being disagreeable.”

After he was recognized with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine last month, he said he received a note from someone who often voted against him while they were both commissioners.

The note congratulated Lloyd, adding that he was “a vital force in the community.”

Lloyd smiled as he finished reading the note aloud.

“I’d rather have that than a new pickup truck,” he said.

