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CITY OF PALMDALE

NEWS RELEASE

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DATE: November 12, 2015

First Mayor of Palmdale Larry Chimbole Passes Away

PALMDALE – City of Palmdale officials were deeply saddened to learn that its first mayor Larry Chimbole passed away on Nov. 10.

“Not only have we lost one of our City’s founders and first mayor, but a dear, dear friend,” said Palmdale Mayor Jim Ledford. “Words cannot adequately express our sorrow and our thanks to Larry for a lifetime of service, dedication, devotion and love for the citizens of Palmdale and the greater Antelope Valley. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.”

Larry Chimbole was born in New Haven, Connecticut on May 22, 1919. A graduate of Stamford High School in 1937, Chimbole moved to California shortly after World War II, where he served as a B-29 radio operator in the Army Air Corps on the Pacific Island of Tinian. He settled in Glendale, CA, before migrating west to the San Fernando Valley, and in 1957 to the community of Palmdale.

When Larry arrived in Palmdale, the population was approximately 7,100 people. There was no incorporated City of Palmdale or City of Lancaster, no Antelope Valley Freeway, no California Aqueduct, no Antelope Valley, Crystallaire or Rancho Vista Country Clubs, no Antelope Valley Mall, no Paraclete, Quartz Hill, Highland or Littlerock High Schools, no AV Courthouse, no Antelope Valley Board of Trade, no regional county library, no hospital, no Palmdale Amphitheater, no DryTown Water Park, no Poncitlán Square and no Palmdale Auto Mall.

Being the owner of a hardware store in Palmdale, he almost immediately became involved in Palmdale's civic affairs as president of the Palmdale Kiwanis Club, then president of the Palmdale Chamber of Commerce in 1961.

Chimbole was instrumental in leading the City of Palmdale into incorporation as one of the "50 Grand Men," who each donated money to fund the process. After the city was successfully incorporated in 1962, he was elected as the City's first Mayor. He helped bring the Lockheed Assembly plant to the Antelope Valley and was instrumental in the development of the Antelope Valley and its freeway system.

Chimbole went on to serve two terms in the California State Assembly from 1974 to 1978 – the first Antelope Valley resident to ever be elected to the legislature.

Chimbole served a total of twelve years on the Palmdale City Council, where he also represented the City as the President of the California Contract Cities Association and as President of the Los Angeles County Division of the League of California Cities. Running as a Democrat in a highly Republican area, he was elected to the California State Assembly in 1973. In 1974, Chimbole was responsible for arranging the National Guard Armory to be located in Palmdale instead of Lancaster.

After being defeated in the 1978 Assembly election, Chimbole continued to serve his community by serving as a member of the State Board of Landscape Architects, the Antelope Valley Hospital Board of Directors and the Antelope Valley Fair Board of Directors.

In 1996, the Desert Mailer had the front page headline, "Chimbole just keeps on tickin'." In the article, when asked how he would like to be remembered, Chimbole answered, "I would most like to be remembered that I was active as hell around here in 1960. In 1996, I'm just about as active or more so and I think that's my legacy."

In 1999, Larry served as Campaign Chairman of the Antelope Valley Region of the United Way.

In 2006, City officials immortalized the “50 Grand Men” when they formally presented a beautiful plaque that is currently on display at the Larry Chimbole Cultural Center.

On Friday, Aug. 24, 2012, Larry was a featured guest at the City’s 50th Anniversary Celebration, held at Poncitlán Square and attended by thousands.

In 2013, More than 100 friends and family members gathered to celebrate his 94th birthday at the Cultural Center that bears his name. At 94, Chimbole was still very active in the community, where he attended many local community events.

In 2014, a committee was formed to raise funds to create a series of bronze statues called “Legendary Locals.” The first statue in the series was to be of Larry Chimbole. The statue was dedicated on Oct. 8, 2016 across from Palmdale City Hall on a bench in Poncitlán Square. More than 200 people witnessed the unveiling of the statue entitled “The First Mayor” which depicts Chimbole seated on a bench with one arm resting atop the back of the bench to encourage visitors to sit and visit with a “local legend.”