



**Joseph L. Nassif**

Joseph “Joe” Nassif was born in Laurenburg, North Carolina, in 1933. His father and mother immigrated to the United States from Lebanon in 1911 and 1920, respectively. They met in North Carolina and married in 1929. After Joe was born, the family moved to Warsaw, North Carolina,

where Joe attended school through the seventh grade. He graduated high school in Wilson, North Carolina, in 1951.

Joe attended Notre Dame University, receiving a degree in Civil Engineering in 1955. After graduating, he moved to New York City where he worked for the Texas Oil Co. in the famous Chrysler Building. After only fifteen months in the city he received a draft notice from the United States Army. Joe was awarded a direct commission in the Army Corps of Engineers, and during his three years of active duty he served at posts across the country. He was honorably discharged in with the rank of First Lieutenant in 1960. Joe then returned to his home state, got married and enrolled at North Carolina State University where he received a BA in Architecture in 1964. Soon thereafter, the Nassifs and their three children moved to Chapel Hill where Joe had accepted a position with architect Arthur Cogswell. A fourth child was welcomed in 1966.

Despite a growing family and a busy career, Joe became involved in many church, community and civic groups in Chapel Hill. In 1967, he served as president of the Chapel Hill Jaycees. In May 1969, he was elected to the Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen, also serving as Mayor Pro Tem. Joe was elected Chairman of the Orange County Democratic Party in 1972. He would later be appointed to the Board of Elections, serving as a member and then as Chairman until 1977. In the midst of his political involvement, Joe began an architectural company with a close friend. He also found time to coach his son's youth football team for five years and a women's community softball team.

Joe's final political venture began in December 1979 when he was elected Mayor of Chapel Hill. He remained in office for six years before retiring from politics to focus on his family and his growing architectural company.

- Joe Nassif has many fond memories of living in Chapel Hill, but his favorite is the time spent coaching local sports teams. He proudly notes that the women's softball team he coached – though largely comprised of novices – beat a local, undefeated team of experienced players, 7-4. His youngest daughter was the team's bat girl. Joe was also successful with his son's youth football team, which won a championship game in the 1970s. More than thirty years later, Joe's son coaches youth football and occasionally "Coach Nassif" joins his son on the sidelines to coach his grandson.
- Chapel Hill and Carrboro have changed quite a bit since Joe and his family arrived in 1964. He feels the growth of Downtown Chapel Hill has been the most significant change. In his opinion, the new businesses and the opportunities they provide have made the downtown area better than it has ever been.
- Joe is proudest of two initiatives enacted during his time in political office. One of these initiatives addressed the lack of handicap accessible streets within city limits, a cause he undertook while serving as an Alderman in the 1970s. Joe's leadership led Chapel Hill to become the first city in North Carolina with a town ordinance requiring city streets to be

wheelchair accessible. He proudly recalls the first ramp being put in place on the corner of Columbia and Franklin Streets.

- The connection between urban development and the environment is also very important to Joe. He was instrumental in creating a town ordinance that required builders and developers to be cognizant of local flood plains and green space when proposing new ventures. That ordinance has gone a long way toward preserving the natural beauty of the community.
- Joe anticipates a bright future for Chapel Hill and hopes that the community will continue to develop and revitalize the downtown area. He would also like to see increased collaboration between the youth and older citizens of Chapel Hill and Carrboro. He believes such interactions can only have positive effects on the continued growth of both communities.