

GETTING TO KNOW: Lee Radner  
By Diana Taylor-Folberg



You've seen him. Swimming. Attending meetings. Shopping at Safeway. He's one of us – a resident of Golden Gateway Center, an active member of the Barbary Coast Neighborhood Association, and President of FOGG (Friends of Golden Gateway). Lee Radner is just one of the many talented people living in the 'hood.

With a long history of community and civic involvement, it's no wonder Lee Radner took on leadership of FOGG—a city-wide group dedicated to maintaining recreational space in San Francisco. Pointedly, Lee Radner is passionate about the space known simply as “the club” to the hundreds of individuals and families across the City who use the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club.



Lee's passion for civic responsibility, his sense of community as family, and a disciplined nature combined with an intellectual curiosity come from his early years in Chicago followed by service in the Marine Corps during World War II. He admits that WWII was a transforming experience for him. “I knew that if I came back in one piece, I'd give back in some way.”

### **His early years**

Born and raised on the north side of Chicago (his father owned a drugstore and his mother was a librarian) Lee remembers friends, neighbors and family meeting regularly at his parent's home. According to Lee, “Artists, writers, community activists were always talking about interesting ideas, doing interesting things—they were passionate about one thing or another. I thought that was the way life worked.”

Lee talks about his father and his influence on Lee's life: “My father had the largest private book collection in Chicago...he was always talking about the ideas in these books.” He tells of hanging around, listening to his father and his friends' conversation about art, literature, politics. Fighting social injustice was a part of his family's values—“they always had concern for the ‘little guy’.” Family, politics and being involved with your community were synonymous activities in Lee's family. “Community participation was ingrained from an early age,” he says.

After the war, Lee returned to Chicago to finish college. Two important events happened in his young life: having a blind date with a beautiful girl, and working in Adlai Stevenson's campaign for governor of Illinois. Lee ended up marrying the girl, Rogene, who was a student at the Chicago Art Institute.

### **The family moves to San Francisco**

After a particularly dreadful snowstorm in Chicago, Lee and Rogene decided to move west, to San Francisco. The family now included two daughters. Once here, he joined a San Francisco export/import firm, Getz Brothers. Radner traveled for the company, and the trips often took him to the Far East. In between trips, Lee still found time for community activities. He became a leader in the California Democratic Council and ran unsuccessfully for the Mt. View School Board.

### **The travels continue**

Although he left his heart in San Francisco, Lee left the Getz Brothers business and was recruited to manage a radio station in Guam. With that move, Lee and his family fell in love with the south Pacific and remained there for many years. With stints in Singapore, Hong Kong and Guam, the Radner family finally made it halfway back to the States – this time to Hawaii where they spent the next 30 years.

### **The Hawaii years**

While living in Hawaii, both Rogene and Lee stayed busy. Rogene taught art history to disadvantaged youth at the University of Hawaii. Eventually she designed a line of women's clothing – Rogene of Hawaii – and that activity became the focus of their family business. Meanwhile Lee worked in public relations and, of course, became immersed in island politics.

Lee then became the development officer for a new liberal arts college in Maui, Seabury Hall. Later, he served as its COO. As time went on Lee became marketing manager for a large shopping center.

But politics still burned for Lee, and he began his own political consultancy firm—representing state politicians, the mayors across the islands, as well as serving as the state organizer for congressional and presidential races.

After 30 years in Hawaii, Rogene and Lee left their children and grandchildren to return to the city that stole their hearts so many years before. Lee confides, “We love this City...the diversity, the culture, the views, and the accessibility. So in 1996, they moved into the Golden Gateway community, gave up their cars, and joined The Club (The Golden Gateway Tennis & Swim Club on Drumm and Washington Streets). In answer to how they get along sans automobiles, they say: “We take public transportation or rent a car; swimming and walking keep us in great shape.”

### **The secret Lee Radner**

Looking at the man, you might not guess his hobbies and interests. According to his wife, he's a “wonderful dancer.” He's also a good pianist, a gourmet cook. And he's taking acting lessons to fulfill a passion for the theater.

### **The fight to keep the club**



When the Golden Gateway Tennis & Swim Club was threatened by private developers, Lee was asked to take on the leadership of FOGG (Friends of Golden Gateway). As everyone knows, The City is losing families and children to the suburbs. Without them, the City loses the diversity that makes San Francisco such a special place.

Keeping every bit of recreational space is important to maintaining the quality life that's important to families. That's why Lee decided to take on the presidency of FOGG. "I've been given so much in my life...and now I have the time to give back." According to wife Rogene, "Lee loves challenges, has experience in politics and fund-raising, loves preserving things, and has always been willing to be involved in caring for his community."

Every community needs a Lee Radner—a caretaker of special projects like saving The Club. But more importantly, he's helping to preserve recreation and open space for years to come.

(BOX)

Lee Radner has been a constant source of momentum behind and inspiration for the preservation of the GGTS

--Renee Richards and John Hill(END BOX)

(BOX)

It's impossible to overestimate what Lee has accomplished in holding FOGG together. He has devoted more time and spent more energy on the fight to keep affordable recreational space in our neighborhood than all the rest of us combined. In the current phraseology, he is THE MAN, and without him we would all be on a rudderless ship

--Martie Young (END BOX)