

Pasadena Star News

OPINION PAGE

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Commentary - By Larry Wilson

Change at the TofR

Like any properly flourishing organization, the Tournament of Roses hates change. Not in a bad way – just in that understandable way of a group of many White Suiter volunteers and a few staffers who have been putting on the biggest, most flower-bedecked parade in the world since 1890.

Do the trains run on time at the TofR? You could set your atomic clock by it.

And a big reason the bloom has been kept on the rose for the last three decades-plus has been Bill Flinn, who graciously rang me up yesterday to let me know he has just told his colleagues he'll retire as CEO in 2017. Everkind, ever-courteous in the many roles he's played at the organization, Bill has been a dream to work with for a journalist. There have been so many times that can't have been easy – protests from AIDS activists forming a human chain at Orange Grove and Colorado to anti-imperialist forces railing against Grand Marshal Cristobal Colon to Danny Bakewell and the crusade to more fully integrate people of color and women into the Tournament leadership – but Bill has been both entirely unflappable and genuinely without defensiveness whenever, for instance, the paper's editorials felt the need to chime in on the side of... well, change.

"It's been a great journey and I plan on sprinting across the finish line," Bill told me. In many ways he's still the Pennsylvania kid who grew up watching the parade and Rose Bowl Game in the '50s and '60s and dreamed of catching a Pasadena New Year's Day live. He sure hit that goal. Talk about a tough act to follow!