

THE TOP TEN OREGONIANS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Throughout last year, the editors and editorial advisory board of *Portland Living* magazine discussed putting together a year-long project naming the ten most influential or most important Oregonians of the last century.

While we know everyone will not agree with our selections, we hope our attempt will be seen as a sincere effort to summarize the changes we've faced together, how we've handled them and what the next hundred years may bring.

One other point, we purposely did not create a ranking for the top ten, other than for the individual we selected as most influential overall — whose story will appear in our December issue.

So in this first year of the 21st century, we hope you will enjoy reading about Oregon's "Top Ten." Drop us a line and let us know what you think.

Susan Stringer, Editor & Publisher
susans@portlandmag.com

The Visionary

Oregon lost a real giant when Carl Halvorson passed away in 1999, his legacy as an entrepreneur and public leader will make it hard for another to fill his shoes.

What are the standards that define a true leader? Is it someone with demonstrated success in their chosen field of endeavor?

Someone who gives much of their time and/or money to perform civic or public service? Sure, you say, those are important, but lots of people have been financially or intellectually successful but that doesn't make them true leaders, only influential. What counts is a successful track record combined with personal values like honesty, loyalty, humility and integrity.

According to such standards, Carl Halvorson met these measures in full. Halvorson, best known as the lead partner in the Halvorson-Mason Co., a construction and development operation, was a self-effacing man of extraordinary talent. His business ventures were visionary and far-reaching. Halvorson (and the management team he assembled) created and completed projects that will have monumental significance for the region. Similarly, Halvorson's community service activities set a standard for foresight, common sense and integrity that will last for many years.

Halvorson grew up in Butte, Montana. As a young man he got his start in the construction business working for his father, Elling, who at the time was the project attendant for Loveer Construction Company. Taken with the business, Halvorson graduated from the Butte School of Mines at twenty one — beginning one of the most successful construction careers in the northwest.

Halvorson's first project was both big and bold. He talked his employer, Loveer Construction, into a joint venture to build Camp Adair, outside of Corvallis, Oregon. With this start, his company was able to secure a

number of projects in dam building, highway development and utilities construction throughout the western US. He competed against or joint-ventured with the construction giants of the 50s and 60s: Morrison-Knutson; Peter Kiewit, Kaiser Construction, and others. Halvorson's reputation even brought him one of the highest honors in the industry when it elected him President of the Associated General Contractors of America.

In the early 1970s, Halvorson and his former superintendent, Daryl Mason, now his partner, turned their attention to residential land development in Oregon. In that new field, Halvorson formed a joint venture with Bend, Oregon-based

Brooks-Scanlon Lumber Co. (renamed Brooks Resources in 1969) in which Halvorson devised a master plan for a magnificent family resort outside of Sisters. Black Butte Ranch was a crowning achievement for both Halvorson-Mason and the region. Even though Sunriver Resort was gaining national recognition and Bachelor Butte was evolving into Mt. Bachelor, the development of Black Butte was the first development that truly reinforced the notion that the area could become another Vail or Tahoe.

Halvorson-Mason withdrew from the joint venture before the project moved into its later phases. Yet, look-

ing at the development today, Halvorson's master plan, which saved Black Butte's meadows, ponds, lakes and much of its forests in common areas to an unprecedented extent, was largely followed.

Halvorson next turned his attention to a creating a large-scale urban development, of a size and quality that had



never before been seen in the US. Halvorson envisioned a residential community that would incorporate a small European style car-free village with stores, shops, offices, restaurants and a theater grouped around small squares. Apartment and condominiums would be placed on the upper levels and under-

ground parking for residents, commercial users and visitors would make the village a place for people to congregate, interact and shop. Most significant was that Halvorson's concept was to be placed, not on wide open flats, but top of Kerr Mountain with its commanding views of valleys and mountains in every direction! Surrounding this jewel-

like village would be hundreds of clustered homes, apartment complexes and condominium units, intermixed with trails, tennis courts, an Olympic-sized pool and recreation-meeting center, scattered amidst naturally wooded common areas.

Halvorson spent over two years in confidential negotiations with numerous adjacent land owners before he consolidated the ownership of over seven hundred fifty acres. Halvorson then turned to the city of Lake Oswego and requested that they adopt zoning laws which would allow him to build the mixed use town center and surround it with all types of residences, placed among spectacular amenities. The City was swayed by Halvorson's grand design and devised the first

urban planned development ordinance in the United States.

Halvorson, with his team of Daryl Mason, Walt Aman, Bob McHenry, Lem Nelson, and the new addition of a young talented architect; Bud Oringdulph, built Mountain Park, which until recently was the largest planned community in a

metropolitan area in the country, just as Halvorson had seen it ten years earlier.

One little known downside of the Mountain Park project, that haunted Halvorson from then on, was the fact that the centerpiece, the town center, atop Kerr Mountain, was not built due to the failure of two Portland-based Savings & Loan institutions. The loss of the beautiful village was Halvorson's deepest, yet private, disappointment as a developer.

Halvorson's creativity sought another outlet, and it became, perhaps, his greatest gift to Oregon and posterity. Halvorson saw a piece of ground on the Oregon Coast and turned it into a mag-

nificent residential project near Depoe Bay. Called Little Whale Cove, the project was special to Halvorson, it was a gift of vision, environmental ethics and financial sacrifice, made without fanfare or expectation of praise. Through creative design, the project permanently saved over one hundred acres of irreplaceable oceanfront property from condominium box development.

Halvorson's civic successes were nearly as monumental as his commercial developments. Greatest of these was his 13-year leadership of the Board of WPPSS (yes, that's WHOOPS, the infamous nuclear power generation company in Washington state). His calm and

steady leadership during the calamitous bond default calmed Wall Street's nerves, saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and avoided a total collapse of the system. A normal person would have justifiably accepted all kinds of public praise for averting a national financial disaster, but not Carl Halvorson. To him, it was all in day's work. For years, Halvorson was proud that he was the first choice of contractors and unions both to act as an arbitrator of labor disputes in the construction industry.

That mutual trust in Halvorson's integrity and common sense, resulted in settlements in 90% of his arbitrations.



His actions directly avoided work stoppages that would have had financially damaging implications to contractors, workers, and the economies of their areas.

He served on President Richard Nixon's committee to control wage increases in the construction industry. He was named a First Citizen by the Realtors of Portland. His leadership of the Board of Emanuel Hospital saw it through hard financial times and to restored economic health. His long term involvements with the Portland Center for the Performing Arts (PCPA) and his leadership in the location of the Oregon Convention Center on the inner east side, were critical to their creation. He knew that Portland needed thriving local arts organizations so he contributed and led support for the Art Museum, the Symphony, the Opera and numerous other community agencies.

Without any question, Carl Halvorson was a visionary, civic leader, successful businessman, and philanthropist. But those who knew him or worked side by side with him say it was his manner of dealing with others that really set him apart. Halvorson always deflected praise by crediting others as the ones responsible for what was accomplished. Halvorson's many private acts of wise advice to those who sought his help, his confidential gifts and loans forgiven, are known gratefully by hundreds who benefited from his generosity.

Emmon Obi, a Nigerian exchange student who lived with Halvorson and his wife Kaye and their six children for two years, remembers. Partner Daryl Mason whose last years were eased by Halvorson's presence, was thanked by Daryl for his loyal friendship. And there are the two young professionals, one a lawyer, one an engineer, each remember, with continuing gratitude, Halvorson's making their respective mistakes right at his own expense. Hundreds of people's gratitude and love Halvorson silently took with him, but none will ever forget.

By all measures, Carl Halvorson was a great man, a great leader and a great friend. He was a giant of his time and everyone he touched learned to see farther and clearer, and with greater humility. Thanks to Halvorson, we now know that is what greatness is supposed to be.



