



Mostly about People

By Wally Traling

I fulfilled a desire last week by meeting a man whose name is so commonplace around Santa Cruz that you hardly expected it to be connected with real flesh and bones.

The name is Harvey E. West.

He's a slight, balding man of 67 with more heart than flesh, a sharp nose and a friendly boyish way of shaking hands and getting to know you fast.

West is a rich lumberman and land owner from Placerville and you're apt to see his name on plaques many times more than you will ever see him because he's a little shy about standing in the limelight.

Over the past 25 years he has given away more than \$600,000 to individual cities, organizations and governments.

Sort of a hobby.

Since around 1951, he has poured more than \$100,000 into the purchase and development of Harvey West stadium and municipal park.

In 1957 he wrote out a check for \$20,000 to light the stadium; in '58 he wrote another one for \$12,500 to buy more land on which the swimming pool now sits and as an afterthought, \$6500 in '59 for pool locker rooms.

Someone got him interested in the Little League and he sent a whole fleet of trucks with lumber from Placerville to build the fence and club house for the youngsters.

When city councilmen attempted to explore the possibilities of combining the proposed park pool and high school pools as one, West decreed by long distance phone that a pool would go in at Harvey West park or he would withdraw his financial support.

"I don't plan to change my mind because of those fuddy-duddies," he snapped. Money talked and won.

Sometimes West is an implusive philanthropist.

He receives dozens of plaques and framed certificates for his deeds, but he also awards others for theirs—but not with plaques.

In 1957 he gave former Chief of Police Al Huntsman a new four door station wagon for his work with youth and because he was the instigator of what turned out to be Harvey West stadium.

One after in May of 1959, during the dedication of the Harvey West pool, someone casually mentioned that the high school students were having a pretty rough time raising money for a pool. West pulled a checkbook from his coat pocket, dug out a stubby pencil and calmly wrote out \$1000.

Why does this man who lives in the far away hills of El Dorado county shower Santa Cruz with his philanthropic attention?

He was born and raised in So-

quel. His father was a logging boss with the Santa Cruz Lumber company.

Young West graduated in 1909 from the Soquel elementary and that completed his education. He went to work at 15. At 17 he was a bellhop in the former Capitola hotel for two years.

He co-owned a garage in Capitola for awhile, and after World War I hauled lumber for the Santa Cruz lumber company for 15 years, ending up with a fleet of five trucks.

In 1935 he graduated into the big time by buying 30,000 acres in the El Dorado county pine country and formed the Placerville Lumber company.

His wife, the former Leila McFarland of Watsonville, gave him three sons. One was killed in a hunting accident in 1939.

West sold his lumber holdings in 1957, built a new automation lumber mill in Placer county and bought 10,000 acres of subdivision land in Plumas county called his Graegale Land Land and Water company.

While his two sons, Robert and Harvey Jr., operate much of the holdings, West said he spends most of his time working at being philanthropic.

In 1960 it was a new library for Pollock Pines. Before that he owned 7000 feet of Lake Tahoe frontage on Emerald Bay, an island and the Vikingsholm castle. He turned over to the state at half its appraised value of \$300,000 for a park.

He established two Boy Scout camps, helped build two churches, not including a Sunday school building at the Soquel Community church; gave lights for a stadium in Placerville, and contributed heavily to the Shriners hospitals for crippled children.

Since 1939 he has supplied Christmas trees for Folsom prison inmates. They call him the Timberland Santa Claus. One prison poet wrote: "They say that only God can make a tree; but Harvey's Christmas spirit makes us free."

Just recently he set up a TV set in the Placer county jail.

A few years ago he ran onto a part Cherokee Indian who carved wooden Indians for a living. They caught his fancy. Now West has a whole tribe of them—some 40 of them. Many are out at Harvey West park. A couple are on the municipal wharf in front of the Cottardo Stagnaro fish market. They cost West about \$130 each.

West's latest project is his distribution of fake highway patrol cars to a number of counties to help slow down speeders. He gave three to Santa Cruz county last week. This new idea has cost him about \$4000 so far.

Why does he do these things? All he would say is that it gave him a radiant afterglow.

I asked if I could refer to him as a millionaire.

"Hell, I have no cash," he said, "I'm practically broke."

But he didn't look too worried when he said it.

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