



WORLD FORESTRY CENTER

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Harry A. Merlo, long-time WFC Board Director and past Chair of the Executive Board, passed away today on October 24, 2016 at his home in Portland, Oregon. Harry Merlo grew up in an immigrant community in the tiny lumber town of Sterling City, CA, and would go on to become a legendary wood products man, a Fortune 500 CEO, award winning tree farmer, well known philanthropist, the “Father of OSB,” and lifelong tree planter. Harry’s boundless energy was transformative, not just organizationally, but also individually, with the many people he mentored.

As an avid proponent of forestry and wood products, Harry Merlo’s contributions to the forestry community were many, but to this organization he brought the “world” to what was then the “Western Forestry Center.” In a pivotal moment for our organization, he urged our members to look outward, broaden our perspective globally, and to recruit international directors. He funded the new Merlo Hall building on the WFC campus in 1989, and went on to create a new globally focused Institute at WFC.

The International Fellowship Program at the World Forest Institute was Harry’s brainchild, bringing professionals in forestry to Oregon to learn about and exchange information on forest management and forest products. Over a 20-year timespan the Harry A. Merlo Foundation sponsored over 130 Fellows from around the world, a program that continues today to inspire future generations of leaders within the natural resources community.

Harry maintained a close collaboration with WFI that went far beyond funding. He hosted the Fellows at his eastern Oregon ranch for intensive study tours each year, held special dinners at his home, played harmonica around campfires with them, and often just stopped by for a cup of coffee to check on how everyone was doing. He was a constant cheerleader to all of us and one of the most recognizable faces on our board to every staff member, from the front desk to the Executive office.

At a time when the world seems inclined to turn more insular and isolationist, Harry was always reaching out to the world. He saw the globalization trend in forestry long before most, and he understood that the challenges facing foresters here were not dissimilar from the challenges facing foresters elsewhere. His efforts to bring people together to solve common problems in natural resources made a real impact on lives throughout the world.

On behalf of those of us impacted by Harry’s generosity, we thank him for inviting us to be a part of the endearing legacy that he worked so hard to create. To his wife Flo, and his son and grandchildren, we extend, from around the globe, our deepest sympathies, and our sincere thanks for sharing him with us.

Sara Wu
WFI Director
World Forestry Center