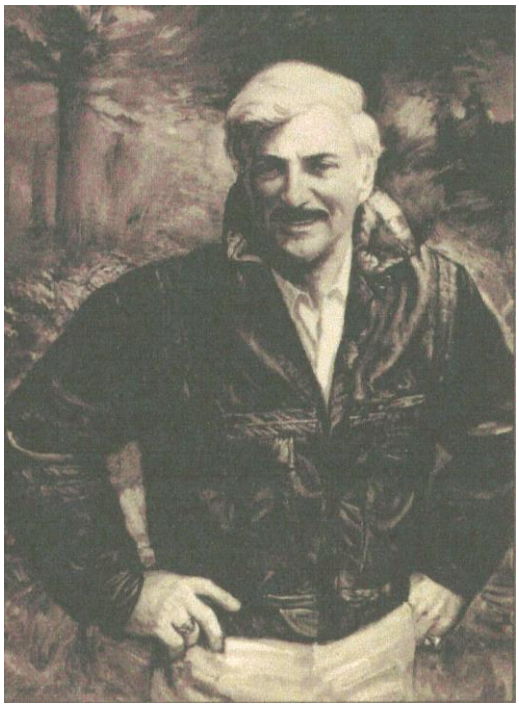

Harry A. Merlo

1925-2016

Chi non lavora, non deve mangiare. Translation: If you don't work, you don't eat. With that simple admonition, Harry A. Merlo's mother set in motion the life of a boy who would grow into a hugely successful businessman, steward of the land, philanthropist, epicure, connoisseur, sportsman and friend of many.

Growing up in a Stirling City, California boarding house operated by his mother, young Harry's successes were neither predicted nor expected. Many obstacles stood in the path of a logging town boy helping his Italian immigrant mother carve a living from serving mill workers. Yet, the values instilled by Clotilde Merlo would in time empower her son to wear his well-earned cloak of accomplishment with grace and confidence.

Harry A. Merlo's feats would become legend but his story is as much about the path to success as it is about ultimate accomplishment. To know Harry is to respect him. To observe him is to be fascinated with his energy. To work with him is to admire his vision. To understand Harry is to love him.

The mature Harry A. Merlo, with credits to his legacy like chairman, president and chief executive of a Fortune 500 company, Forbes Magazine executive of the year, honored philanthropist, prize winning wine producer and recipient of numerous and exceptional awards, might permit himself the luxury of remote aloofness. Quite the opposite, Harry remembers an important figure in his childhood, a mill boss in the town where Italian workers and residents were relegated the least attractive opportunities. "Dick Colgan treated my mother with dignity. He didn't reference her poor Italian ethnicity. He called her Mrs. Merlo. That was dignity and you respond to that kind of respect."

Harry's life long commitment to the dignity of people, their right to live and work in clean, safe environments, to participate in the successes their hard work garnered and to express opinions, all reflect Harry's experience with the wrong side of bigotry and the formative role that Dick Colgan had in shaping the successful Harry A. Merlo. Harry respects the dignity of all people, a trademark of his career and his life.

Certainly, energy is a characteristic of the successful entrepreneur and Harry's energy has always been, and is, boundless. All his life he has embraced opportunities to add value to under utilized resources. Perhaps most notable in his legacy is his championing of oriented strand board as the successor to plywood. In low value wood fiber and mill wood residues, Harry saw waste. And he has always found waste abhorrent, no doubt remembering how his depression era mother was able to transform so little into so much for her boarding house table. Oriented strand board, a product that transformed a company and an industry, is a product of Harry's energy.
But the characteristic Merlo energy showed itself long before Louisiana Pacific Corporation and highly refined wood products ruled the market.

As a World War II Marine Corps officer in training Harry restlessly recuperated in a military hospital after an artillery training accident. A leg was severely damaged but Harry's hands were healthy, idle and energetic. The Marine Corps had made Harry an officer and a gentleman at a young age and a leader for a lifetime. Energy and leadership united in an entrepreneurial effort in the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps hospital where Harry was confined. Leather working tools and abundant leather were provided for those wishing to pursue a craft. Harry began making sportsmen's wallets with hand tooled scenes of trout, deer and pheasant. Discovering that there was a market for the wallets, he began paying nurses fifty cents to stitch wallets and corpsmen fifty cents to sell the wallets. One corpsman found an outlet that sold wallets to the public and Harry was suddenly running a thriving wallet business from the hospital. Prescient of many successes that would follow, this seminal effort recognized the efficacy of identifying a low value resource, rewarding a work force with a share of the profit and marketing to the masses.

After recuperation, with the war over and his Marine Corps career behind him, the young University of California college graduate searched for a place to apply his boundless energy. That opportunity came as a shipping clerk at Rounds and Kirkpatrick Lumber Company in Cloverdale, California. Harry signed on in 1949 and rapidly developed relationships with log suppliers, lumber customers and, importantly, Ralph M. Rounds, a successful lumberman from Wichita, Kansas. Mr. Rounds recognized, mentored and rewarded Harry's talents and by 1955 Harry was appointed general manager of Rounds Redwood Company. Mr. Rounds' influence on Harry would establish an admirable pattern of behavior in Harry. Throughout his busy career Harry would always find time to mentor talented young people.

Harry A. Merlo's successes within the Rounds' organizations were widely noticed in industry associations and among competing forest products companies. Georgia Pacific Corporation

and Chairman Robert M. Pamplin were particularly cognizant of the dynamic Merlo. By the mid-60's Harry had achieved too much at Rounds Redwood Company to go unnoticed. Simply stated, Harry was invited to go to work for Georgia Pacific. In politely declining the offer Harry expressed to Mr. Pamplin his loyalty to his employers and employees at Rounds Redwood. Undaunted, Mr. Pamplin then countered by offering to buy Rounds Redwood Company. Georgia Pacific prevailed and Harry became a vice president of Georgia Pacific Corporation.

Soon Georgia Pacific's capacity in plywood and lumber manufacturing attracted the attention of the Federal Trade Commission, causing Georgia Pacific to divest itself of a portion of its operations. In 1972 Louisiana Pacific Corporation was created and Harry A. Merlo was selected to run the new entity. Harry's tenure as chairman, president and chief executive at Louisiana Pacific Corporation is the stuff of business legend. Creative, innovative, energetic, opportunistic and entrepreneurial are all adjectives that described the inseparable nature of Louisiana Pacific and Harry Merlo. One built the company and, in turn, the company reflected the nature of its leader. Through Louisiana Pacific, Harry created new products, pulling an entire industry into a new era.

Harry's lifelong attraction to the forest products industry and his innate ingenuity for adding value to under appreciated resources positioned Harry for success. As old growth timber dwindled in supply and forest management practices became more restrictive, Harry saw opportunity in higher utilization. He dreamed of the total use of trees, leaving no waste behind in the logging process. He sought innovative ideas, creative manufacturing processes and nascent markets for new products. There were many new products and many successes but none more successful than oriented strand board, which became the dominant building product in America and beyond. Using wood wafers claimed from sources once considered waste, highly refined manufacturing plants that oriented wood wafers into layers of complementary strength and using the most sophisticated bonding agents, Louisiana Pacific commanded the market with its oriented strand board, a panel product that quickly supplanted plywood in sheathing the homes of America. Harry was acclaimed "the father of oriented strand board" throughout the world.

The Merlo legacy was nowhere near complete, however, with his successes as the heralded leader of Louisiana Pacific Corporation. Harry's love of life and his respect for the lives of others, his constant optimism and his conviction that he can positively touch the lives of others caused him to create the Harry A. Merlo Foundation. Through Harry's personal philanthropy and with careful guidance that has made the foundation focused and highly effective, the Merlo Foundation has vastly improved the lives of young people by fostering, nurturing and educating those lacking life opportunities. Programs for homeless street children to fellowships for international interns define the scope of the Merlo Foundation's philanthropy. The focus of the Merlo Foundation's attention lifted many institutions out of obscurity into success and recognition, as much because of Harry's attention and interest as because of his financial generosity. To attract Harry Merlo's attention and confidence is to be empowered by a force

more powerful than financial assistance alone.

The World Forestry Center, the World Forest Institute and The Harry A. Merlo Award are examples of accomplishments driven by the desires of others to measure up to the vision and expectations of Harry A. Merlo. Particularly, the Harry A. Merlo Award reflects the World Forestry Center's goal to honor Harry by recognizing individuals worldwide who have made a lifetime commitment to creating affordable and sustainable building products for the betterment of humankind.

The complexities and attractiveness of Harry A. Merlo exceed the boundaries of the forest products industry and the generosity of his foundation. Harry's demands on himself are evident. Physically fit and physically driven all his athletic life, he expects no less of others. Neat and tidy, he assumes that others share his passion for cleanliness. Creative and energetic, he expects others to follow his examples. Expecting success in those whom he trusts and supports, he's disappointed when performance is unequal to expectation. His high standards, high expectations and deeply held convictions attract the admiration of those similarly dedicated.

Passionate about the outdoors, Harry is a legendary hunter and fisherman. As a real estate investor, his penchant for neatness and productivity has transformed previously neglected properties into wildlife habitat and model riparian projects. Where the land will support another of Harry's passions, wine grapes grow in profusion. Vested in Harry's Italian roots are his love of the grape and the nurturing of fine wine.

Perhaps it is in the latter of Harry's successes that life for this talented man comes full circle. In the modest homes of Harry's Italian-influenced childhood, wine was a part of everyday life. Long before wine was chic, collectable and socially dominant in America, Harry's interest was keen and focused. As a young man he began investing in property that might one day sustain grapevines. He also collected fine wines, some of which grace his cellar fifty years later.

Among the many marks for which Harry can rightfully take pride, none is more dominant in his every thought and deed than the accomplishments of his son, Harry A. Merlo, Jr. Winemaker and steward of the Merlo California ranch, keeper of the Lago di Merlo wine label and proud sustainer of the Merlo vision and passion, Harry A. Merlo, Jr. is assurance that his father's dreams will endure. The lineage continues with a third Merlo generation residing on the California wine lands that Harry A. Merlo purchased a half century ago. Two grandsons, Dominic and Anthony offer proof and promise of Clotilde Merlo's credo, *Chi non lavora, non deve mangiare.* If you don't work, you don't eat. Because of the work ethic of generations of Merlos, many eat well today.

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