



Richard P. Wollenberg

1915-2014

At home in the mill or in the timberlands, Richard P. Wollenberg has dedicated himself to sustainable forestry and to guiding the growth of Longview Fibre Company of Longview, Washington, into an industry-leading forest and paper products company. With a deep understanding of the industry and a vision for the future, Richard Wollenberg has led his company by investing in recycling technology, manufacturing, and forward-thinking forestry management.

An Alaskan by birth, Richard was born in 1915 in Juneau to Harry L. and Gertrude (nee Arnstein) Wollenberg. Harry L. Wollenberg worked as chief engineer for a mining company, and business soon took the Wollenberg family eastward. The Wollenbergs lived in New York as well as New England, where Richard attended grade school for six years.

In 1926, Monroe Wertheimer, a longtime friend, invited Harry Wollenberg to join a new venture, the Longview Fibre Company. The company intended to use previously wasted Douglas fir chips to manufacture paperboard. The Wollenberg family moved back west, settling in San Francisco. Founded in 1926, Longview Fibre began operations in 1927 with Harry Wollenberg serving as the company's President. While the company's mill operated in Longview, its main offices were located in San Francisco.

Richard attended Galileo High School in the North Beach section of San Francisco. A strong student, Richard enrolled in the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his BS degree in Mechanical Engineering. In 1938, he earned his MBA from Harvard.

Following his graduation from Harvard, Richard decided against joining his father at Longview Fibre for fear of creating the appearance of nepotism. Instead, he took a position with Bethlehem Shipping in Quincy, Massachusetts, where he got his first taste of working on the factory floor. "I began as a shipfitter's helper and swung a 40-pound sledgehammer," said Richard. "I liked being a man of the factory floor." Richard carried the lessons of this experience with him throughout his career, always emphasizing hands-on management and the importance of understanding the tasks of every employee.

The elder Mr. Wollenberg, however, needed a skilled engineer, so in 1939 Richard went to work for Longview Fibre, where he has spent his entire career. He began as a Safety Engineer, and progressed through Assistant Chief Engineer, Chief Engineer, Manager of Container Operations, Vice President of Operations, and Executive Vice President. In 1969, he became President of the company; in 1978, he was appointed Chief Executive Officer; and in 1985, he was named Chairman of the Board of Directors. Still active in the year 2000 as Chairman, President and CEO, Richard is the only employee to have been honored by the company with a 60-year service pin.

Richard's early work at the company was interrupted

by wartime service. While completing his ROTC obligation in the U.S. Army Air Corps, during which he attended the Army Industrial College in Washington, D.C., the United States entered World War II. Richard's one-year tour of duty became a five-year hitch. Serving with distinction in various positions, he eventually achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel at age 29. In 1945, Richard returned to Longview Fibre for good.

Back in southwest Washington, Wollenberg joined his wife Leone (Lee), nee Bonney, whom he had married in 1940. Eventually the Wollenberg family included five children, Kenneth, David, Keith, Carol, and Richard, as well as several grandchildren. Richard H. "Rick" Wollenberg has followed in his father's footsteps, serving as a senior officer at Longview Fibre.

During his years at the helm of Longview Fibre, Richard worked tirelessly to grow the company, particularly by placing emphasis on investment in technology and spending considerable time directly overseeing operations. "I like to see with my own eyes, talk to the people who are actually doing the work so I know what their problems are, what their functions are, what their successes are."

Richard also believed that the company's considerable growth over the last 30 years can be attributed to its streamlined management. Longview Fibre runs without the multi-layered bureaucracy that burdens many other large organizations, as Richard noted, "We make capital decisions in days or weeks that take other companies months or years."

Richard never let being a shrewd businessman conflict with the respect and care that he held for the people who make Longview Fibre a success. An editorial in the Longview Daily News made this very point. "He cares about Fibre's relationships with the people who work with him...Time and again, Fibre has kept work crews busy doing maintenance or machine upgrades when there were too few orders to keep all machines operating—Wollenberg has chosen to run Fibre that way because he understands how hard layoffs are on workers and their families."

Longview Fibre was built on the utilization of wastewood, and Richard has expanded on this tradition. The company was the first firm in the U.S. to make pulp out of wastewood, pioneering recovery of Douglas fir sawmill residuals that had simply been burned in the past. Today Longview Fibre continues to expand its use of wastewood by chipping defective, diseased, dying and dead trees, as well as wood chunks recovered from harvested timberlands. The company's urbanwood recovery program generates chips from wood pallets, crates, and leftover lumber from construction projects. Under Richard's leadership, the company had also developed extensive, state-of-the-art recycling operations that recover used boxes.

To expand into solid-wood products and create a hedge against fiber shortages, Richard also led Longview Fibre's effort to expand its timberland holdings. By the year 2000, the company maintained 571,000 acres on nine tree farms.

With policies and practices that ensure a sustained yield, the company has planted more than 100 million trees.

Richard expanded his industry leadership beyond the boundaries of Longview Fibre, and worked actively with several state and national trade associations. He is a past board member of the American Forest & Paper Association and the Institute of Paper and Science Technology. He has also served as Chairman of the Pacific Coast Association of Pulp and Paper Manufacturers.

While putting family and company first, Richard has actively pursued two other interests – making music and promoting education. A dedicated musician, he plays all woodwind instruments and serves as a bassoonist with the Southwest Washington Symphony. A long-time member of the musician's union, he also plays a mean saxophone at various dances and gigs in the southwest Washington area.

For nearly 40 years, Richard has been involved in education both at his company and throughout the Northwest. Since 1962, he has been a trustee for Reed College in Portland, Oregon. For many years, including three as Chair, Richard served on the Washington Council for Post-Secondary Education. He also chaired the Education Committee of the Washington Roundtable, an organization of Washington State business leaders that works closely with legislators and the Governor on critical public policy issues. Richard has also made education an object of his philanthropy.

Richard has carried his concern for education back into the workplace as well, providing training programs that help both employees and the company. With the success of Longview Fibre's own programs, he has become a strong advocate for workplace training. "Our people have to understand electronics and sophisticated controls, and we are constantly giving training courses and upgrading people. I believe American industry should actually be doing that instead of trying to hire somebody away from somebody else by paying a ridiculous premium. I believe it is better to take bright people in the labor market and give them the training that they need."

Richard's dedication to education and public service has been recognized through numerous awards and honors. In 1977, he received an Honorary Doctorate of Public Affairs from the University of Puget Sound. In 1994, he was honored as a Distinguished Alumnus by the Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, with special emphasis given to his efforts on behalf of higher education.

Richard himself has been a lifelong learner, and his passion for knowledge and hard work has enabled him to lead his company well past the time when other men and women settle into retirement. "My personal motivation is my intellectual curiosity," noted Richard. "I consider every day a challenge."