
Howard Franklyn Skidmore

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Howard Franklyn Skidmore
September 24, 1917 ~ March 4, 2008

CARMEL – Howard Franklyn Skidmore, newspaperman and public relations counsel, died peacefully at age 90 on Tuesday, March 4, 2008. Born in Brooklyn, Howard attended New York City College and pursued a newspaper career on the editorial staff of the New York Herald Tribune, 1937-1942, and after wartime service, 1945-1947. It was at the "Trib" that he met his wife, Zaza Irina O'Hara, radio-TV editor.

Howard left the Herald Tribune in 1948 to join railroad and movie tycoon Robert R. Young at the C & O Railway, moving to the Cleveland headquarters the following year. Rising through the executive ranks, Howard became Director of Public Relations, 1954-1959, and then Vice-President of the C & O and B & O Railways, 1963-1977.

From 1954 until 1977 when he left the railroad to start his own public relations consultancy, Howard served as special assistant to C & O's chairman, Cyrus S. Eaton. Last of the great tycoons in the mold of Carnegie and Rockefeller, Eaton advocated



friendlier relations and trade with the Soviet Union in view of the Cold War peril of mutual nuclear destruction. He sponsored the Pugwash conferences of concerned scientists which eventually won the Nobel Peace Prize. Howard aided Eaton in improving relations with the Russians and had contact with Soviet premier Nikita S. Khrushchev in Moscow, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Khrushchev was but one of the many world leaders and celebrities that Howard was privileged to encounter, and he used to give a humorous lecture entitled "Famous People Who Have Met Me." The list included Harry Truman, Ike and Mamie Eisenhower, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and the most important celebrity in his life, Zaza O'Hara, radio-TV editor and spouse.

Howard once observed that he went from night rewriter at the Herald Tribune to the 45th floor of the Chrysler Building with a private office and secretary. Travel was by limousine and private railroad car to luxury hotel suites, including the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia.

A life-long learner, Howard was an avid student of history and literature. He was particularly fond of writing and reciting poetry. One of his topics was the endless delight he took in the otters of Monterey Bay. Another avocation led to the discovery of the first recorded Skidmore in history, a knight who was born in Normandy and fought at the Battle of Hastings.

Howard loved trees and was an active member of the Friends of Carmel Forest. He attended every beach clean-up and even invented his own beach-cleaning device.

Howard's authorial and editorial skills were put to use on the newsletters of the Carmel Public Library and the Carmel Residents Association, on both of which boards he served. Howard was passionate about his civic responsibilities.

When Howard retired from the railroad business in 1977, his resignation letter began, "In the newspaper business the symbol -30- has been used to indicate the end of the typed copy. That number of years would seem, therefore, to be an appropriate point at which to end one chapter of a lifetime."

Fittingly, Howard ended the final chapter at 3 x 30, having celebrated a memorable 90th birthday party with Carmel friends and family in September 2007.

In addition to his beloved wife, Zaza, Howard leaves behind children, Joel Michael Skidmore and Susan Nicely, and grandchildren, Nicola and Brendan Skidmore. Contributions are encouraged to the Carmel Public Library Foundation, P.O. Box 2042, Carmel, CA 93921.

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