

Date of Hearing: April 12, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 40 (Mathis) – As Introduced March 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Harry Tow Memorial Highway Overcrossing

SUMMARY: Designates the highway overcrossing in the City of Visalia off Plaza Drive and California State Route 198 at postmile R 4.796 as the Harry Tow Memorial Highway.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns Caltrans the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, however the bill requests that Caltrans determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering that cost, erect those signs.

COMMENTS: Harry Tow was a true Visalian at heart, and his enduring mark is imprinted on the lives of all who were fortunate enough to work with him. In his lifetime of service, Harry's many accomplishments and wise planning helped lay the foundation for creating the quality community that Visalia is today.

Over the last 60 plus years, Harry established an extraordinary record of service to our Central Valley community as a city official, professional engineer and planner, business owner, mentor, and church, and community leader. He has been recognized for his professional skills in civil engineering, environmental planning and city management, as well as his personal contributions in leading young adults and passion for creating economic growth in the Central Valley.

As a child in 1938, Harry moved with his parents to Long Beach, CA, from his small town of Marshalltown, Iowa. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the Navy V-12 fliers program while concurrently attending university. Harry graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California in civil engineering in 1947, as well as a master's degree in 1952 in the same field.

After receiving his undergraduate degree, Harry secured his first professional employment with the County of Ventura as an assistant hydraulic engineer in 1947. Within a year, he had advanced to the City of Los Angeles as a design engineer, and provided supplemental design work to the private international firm of Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Manderhall.

In 1956, Harry and his family moved to Visalia, where he remained a public employee as the City Engineer. In 1958, Harry became the City Manager for Visalia, where he remained for 14 years. Harry's tenure as a City Manager included the revitalization of downtown. The emphasis on preserving downtown during Harry's time as City Manager was very important because that was when downtown was first being challenged economically by the first shopping centers and malls along Hwy 198 and Mooney Blvd. in Visalia.

Harry Tow's tenure as a City Manager for Visalia oversaw incredible improvements and development for the community. Along with a number of dedicated city councils and exceptional staff members, Harry was instrumental in helping to shape the community as it stands today.

Among the achievements that he takes pride for his share in their evolution are: the successful creation of the downtown Visalia convention center; the transfer of Kaweah Delta Hospital from the City to the Kaweah Delta Hospital District and the further development and expansion of the current facility; the revitalization of the North Visalia community; the preliminary steps to protect, preserve, and revitalize the City's downtown area, as well as provide crucial parking capacity.

Even though Harry's schooling was in engineering, he is also an expert in California environmental law (CEQA) and earned his certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners. He had been preparing environmental impact reports since CEQA first became law in 1970 for projects throughout the Central Valley that included hospitals, shopping centers, colleges, large dairies, and manufacturing complexes. He used his engineering and planning expertise to help lay the groundwork for City's plan policy and the development of the Plaza Regional Park Facility.

Eventually, in 1972, Harry left the City and co-founded Quad Consulting to provide engineering, planning, and management assistance to both public and private clients. In 1998, Quad merged with Knopf Engineering and formed what is now operating as QK (an employee owned company) with offices in Visalia, Clovis, Merced, Bakersfield and Porterville. Harry continued his lifelong mentorship to others while continuing working almost full time as a Principal Engineer and Environmental Planner until the age of 94.

Harry gave selflessly of his time and experience by helping people in the art of professionalism and ethical practices. As a community member, Harry instilled these ethics into our youth as a Boy Scout Cub Master and committee member of a local service club-sponsored troop. His enduring mark is imprinted on the lives of all who were fortunate enough to work with him.

In addition to his lifelong leadership with the Boy Scouts, Harry served on the board for the College of the Sequoias Foundation, Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation, St Paul's Episcopal School, and Diocese of Camp San Joaquin. He was also the former President of the Tulare County Industrial Park, Visalia Rotary Club, and San Joaquin Valley City Manager's Association.

Harry and his high school sweetheart, Shirley, were married for 73 years. Together they had three sons; their late son John, Bill who resides in Australia and works as the head of the Department of International Relations at the University of Australia, and Robert who owns an electronics business in Three Rivers, CA.

Previous legislation: ACR 115 (Mathis) Chapter 118, Statutes of 2016 designates a portion of State Route 168 in Inyo County as the Richard "Dick" Noles Memorial Highway.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Julia Kingsley / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093