

Paul Trousdale, Developer and Innovator, Dies

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Paul W. Trousdale, the real estate developer who created Beverly Hills' fashionable Trousdale Estates and built more than 25,000 homes throughout Southern California, has died. He was 75.

Trousdale died Monday in Santa Barbara, according to an announcement Wednesday from El Camino Memorial Park and Mortuaries in San Diego. Trousdale was chairman of the board of El Camino.

Born on a farm near Gallatin, Tenn., Paul Whitney Trousdale grew up shuttling between relatives in New York, Tennessee and Los Angeles. He graduated from Los Angeles High School.

Trousdale's sales talent emerged during his single year at USC, when he sold cars, clothes and automobile spotlights, earning enough, he once told an interviewer, to "take out 4,000 or 5,000 girls."

Loading freight elevators during a vacation job with an uncle in New York, Trousdale suffered a crushed foot. The New York State Industrial Department

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awarded him \$5,000 for college, and the adventuring Trousdale took it, got on a steamer and went around the world.

Landing in San Pedro, 20 years old and broke in the height of the Depression, he immediately eloped with a USC sweetheart, Margaret Reid. The marriage lasted nearly 30 years.

Trousdale started selling gum—but switched to real estate because he decided it was better to sell something big, like buildings.

In 1946, he established Trousdale Construction Co. and began building tract homes and communities complete with churches and shopping centers, including many in minority areas, in Long Beach, Wilmington, Compton and the San Fernando Valley.

"I built community centers in those projects," he proudly recalled, "and a community swimming pool, play yards and a clubhouse in each."

At one point, his company had so many outstanding loans with Bank of America that the bank founder, A. P. Giannini, personally popped into Trousdale's Westwood Hills office to quiz him on how much he was paying for nails and concrete.

A marketing innovator, Trousdale taught prospective buyers of his three-bedroom, two-bath homes in Westdale Village—a development built in West Los Angeles in the late 1940s—how to furnish such a house on a limited budget. Giving his project decorators only \$1,000, he had them prepare a model as "The House of Hand-Me-Downs," buying furniture and knickknacks at second-hand stores and bargain basements.

In 1954, Trousdale purchased the 410-acre Doheny Ranch in the hills north of Beverly Hills and went into upscale development. One-acre home sites in his new Trousdale Estates sold for \$40,000.

During the same period, Trousdale created residential communities in pricey Marin County north of San Francisco, in Hawaii and Palm Springs.

Trousdale expanded to larger



Paul W. Trousdale

structures, building a hotel on Waikiki in Honolulu, and Southern California's first cooperative apartment building, the 22-story Beverly Towers, at 9220 Sunset Blvd.

"It's thrilling," he once said of his career, "to take a worthless mountain or swamp and create something beautiful and lasting. It's exciting."

Although he did not graduate, Trousdale remained a loyal alumnus and benefactor of USC and served on its Board of Trustees.

He is survived by his wife, Adrienne, two daughters from his first marriage, Mary Dickie of Carmel and Marguerite Trousdale of Mill Valley, and five grandchildren.

The family has asked that any memorial contributions be made to the USC Landscape Fund.