

Jennifer Budwig
Community Comment

Hi, I'm Jennifer Budwig with today's community comment. I'd like to talk a bit today about the Mel and Grace McLean Foundation for which I have been a board member for three years. Since inception, the Foundation has granted over \$15MM in grants to non-profit organizations in Humboldt County. It's located in Fortuna, California.

Mel McMel was born in Madras, Oregon, on land homesteaded by his parents. His mother died when he was 11, and Mel lived with aunts and uncles. He graduated from high school and attended one year at the Columbia Academy in Walla Walla, Washington. He worked at various jobs at a very young age, always making the most of each experience.

He was a truck driver for Rose City Pies in Portland, Oregon, when he met his future wife, Grace Rudge. He was delivering pastries to her deli/restaurant. They were married December 24, 1937 in Chehalis, Washington. Thereafter, they moved to Castle Rock, Washington where Mel and Stanley Shaffer operated a tie mill.

In 1946, with his apartment neighbor, Robert Boggs, a Safeway manager, the B & M Stores of Everett, Washington were established. This venture started as a corner grocery store, but soon grew to a five-store chain of very large supermarkets with land holdings for several shopping centers and future stores.

Robert Rudge, Mel's brother-in-law, managed the day-to-day operations of the stores. These stores were extremely successful until their sale in 1986.

By 1948, Mel, Stanley Shaffer and George Lindsey (Stanley's father-in-law) purchased a redwood mill on the Bar W Ranch near Bridgeville, California. This was the start of the Lindsey Lumber Company. In 1950, a fire destroyed the sawmill, so with a contract from the Fairhurst interests covering the Perry, Wheat and Whitlow Ranches, they moved to McCann, California. The company grew to ten tie and 2x4 mills and a planing mill. The 1955 flood took out the planing mill, and subsequently, they rebuilt to start again. These mills continued to operate until the timber was depleted.

As the timber was running low at McCann, Mel looked for another sawmill operation. In 1958, Mel and Stanley purchased the Johnnie Voll sawmill at Metropolitan, near Rio Dell. This was the beginning of Eel River Sawmills.

He acquired two more sawmill and thousands of acres of timberland. His ranch at Blocksburg along with his home in Fortuna were two of his prized possessions.

Mel started to fund a substantial gifting program from his own funds. This continued until his death. He granted \$2,230,000 into the community in the last four years of his life. Mel died in May 1999 but the Foundation directors pulled out the documents, did some research, talked with a lot of people, and opened for business about the 1st of January 2000.

Since that time, the Foundation has granted about \$15MM into the Humboldt County Community to support non-profit organizations.