

John F. Long

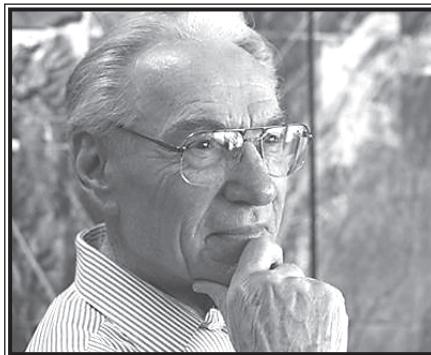
John F. Long, a native Phoenician who played a major role in transforming the city from a small town into the metropolis it is today, passed away early on the morning of February 29, 2008.

Born John Frederick Pilger on May 17th 1920, the first child of German immigrants, he learned the value of hard work as a boy. His father passed away suddenly and Fred was expected to contribute to the family coffers in whatever way he could -- selling newspapers, milking cows, herding cattle -- anything that brought in a few dollars. His mother remarried and he took his stepfather's name, Long. With the Depression in full bloom there was little time to celebrate.

Of course, it wasn't all work. One summer night at a softball game in 1937, a girl on the Webster's Dairy team caught his eye. Her name was Mary Tolmachoff, and the two began dating. World War II interrupted their courtship and John was eventually posted with the 456th Bomber Group in Stornara, Italy, where he worked as a mechanic on B-17's and B-24's.

Upon his return from the war, John and Mary set out to build themselves a home with tools borrowed from his stepfather and a G.I. loan. Before they could move in, a buyer offered the newlyweds twice what the house cost them to build. John F. Long Homes was born and Mary would have to wait a little longer for "her" house.

With a clear vision of the future and ideas about more efficient home-building, John soon set his sights on large tracts of land in what at that time was considered "way out west" in Phoenix. Maryvale, named after



his wife, was the first master planned community in Arizona. At its peak, 100 houses a day were being sold -- homes for working people, built with an acute attention to detail. A large sign in the company shop read "Build every home as if you planned to own it," and that simple, honest ethic infused everything the company did.

By the 1960s there were subdivisions scattered throughout the Valley. Concerned with the environment and excited by new technology, John built his Solar One housing development as a showcase for water conservation and solar electric production. As always, the emphasis was on quality for a fair price. Upon his induction to the National Housing Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C., John remarked, "I'd like to thank 30,000 home buyers, without whom none of this would have been possible."

For his achievements as Arizona's most prolific, innovative and visionary builder, he was selected as one of the inaugural inductees into the Arizona Business Hall of Fame. Additional honors include Doctor of Humane Letters from Arizona State University, Arizona Historymaker, and the first Lifetime Achievement

Award from Westmarc. The latter has since been renamed The John F. Long award.

Driven by his deep sense of civic responsibility, he created a philanthropic foundation which has supported local charities, schools and general community needs in the Valley for nearly 50 years. This work will continue.

John's family was as important to him as his work. The father of three once said, "My business and family life are really one. Trying to separate them would be like trying to separate the hump from the camel." His philosophy was always to give what he could, never back away from a challenge, and always stand up for the "little guy."

He is preceded in death by his beloved wife, Mary; his sister, Betty, and his half-brother Bill. He is survived by his children, Manya, Jake and Tot (David Lewis); grandchildren Jamie (Jake Lungren), Dan, Matt and Arron; great grandson, Abe; and his half-sister Lula Rose.

A funeral service, open to the public, will be held at 10 a.m., Monday, March 10, at The Community Church of Joy, 21000 N. 75th Ave, in Glendale, AZ. Interment will follow at Resthaven Park Cemetery, 6290 W. Northern Avenue, Glendale, AZ.

Rest in peace Fred, you earned it.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hospice of the Valley 1510 E. Flower Street, Phoenix, AZ 85014 and American Baptist Homes of the West Foundation - for benefit of The Terraces - Phoenix - 6120 Stoneridge Mall Road, 3rd Floor Pleasanton, CA 94588.