



Perris News

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Harley Knox Interchange Dedicated



Inland Area leaders, including Mayor Daryl Busch (second from right) and Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough (right) attended the dedication at the March Field Air Museum

Harley Knox could have spent his time with his feet up and watching the ocean from a beach house.

The owner of a hugely successful owner of turf seed and produce-equipment manufacturing companies, Mr. Knox didn't need to exert his time and resources on anything but himself and his family.

But the Perris Valley resident put community interests above his own. He lobbied intensively in Washington D.C. to convince federal officials to approve an interchange on I-215 near March Air Reserve Base. Although the area was undeveloped when the interchange was built 15 years ago, Mr. Knox saw it as a gateway to Perris and surrounding communities, a lifeline that would transform the region by bringing jobs and commercial and residential development. Mr. Knox died in 2005.

This week, friends and former business partners, civic and municipal leaders and family members remembered the man they hailed as a visionary whose legacy will touch future generations of residents. The event was the dedication ceremony of the Harley Knox Interchange, formerly known as Oleander Avenue. Signs along the interstate were changed from Oleander to Harley Knox Boulevard in January.

"My father never tolerated public acclaim," said Mr. Knox's son, Aaron Knox. "He was dedicated to his values and he measured himself and his friends on those values—do not take what has not been earned and do not give until it has been earned."

Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley led a contingent of Inland representatives who praised Harley Knox's contributions to Perris and the region. The City's contingent included Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough, City Manager Richard Belmudez, Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager Michael McDermott and Planning Manager Brad Eckhardt.

Mayor Busch said the dedication was all about looking to the future.

"It's about what we do and where we're going," Busch said. "It is a great pleasure to acknowledge Harley Knox and what he has done for our community."

Ashley said he and Mr. Knox met weekly for lunch in Perris, where the menu always included combread and pinto beans. During their conversations, Ashley said Mr. Knox spoke continuously about the need to bring to bring businesses and development to the area.

"He was a tireless advocate for economic growth along this (I-215) corridor," Ashley said. "He wanted good jobs and a high quality of life. If it wasn't for Harley Knox, we would not have this interchange."

Harley Knox carried a spirit of enterprise throughout his life. As a young boy, he cleaned out chicken coops and sold the product to fertilizer companies. Later, with the advent of Dichondra lawns, Mr. Knox began a seed and turf business that became the industry leader. The business grew to include sod and the manufacturing of high-speed produce harvesting and handling equipment.

Knox also served on numerous civic boards, including the Inland Empire Economic Partnership, the Valley Group, the Riverside County Building Industry Association, the Western Riverside Council of Governments, the Riverside Community College Foundation and the Riverside Community Hospital Foundation. He served as a commissioner for the California Boating and Waterways Commission.

This week's dedication took place at the March Field Air Museum, near a monument to legendary aviator James Doolittle. Participants said it was a most appropriate location. Harley Knox helped raise money for the monument. In a tribute read into the Congressional Record, U.S. Rep. Ken Calvert called Mr. Knox a "man who will long be remembered for his innumerable contributions and the tremendous leadership he displayed in the Inland Empire."

"The Inland Empire is a better place to live today because of Harley's extraordinary contributions and his selfless dedication to his community," Calvert said.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch speaks to the crowd who attended the ceremony.



Aaron Knox holds a smaller version of the sign honoring his father. Harley Knox served the Inland Area and Perris Valley for decades as a farmer, developer and advocate for regional economic development.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez listens during the dedication. Standing next to him is Barry Busch, an aide to Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley.