



SCHOLARSHIP DONOR BIO

WILLIAM GEORGE “BILL” STROECKER

William George “Bill” Stroecker was the best known civic leader in Fairbanks over the 50-year period 1960-2010 when he passed at age 90. Born July 31, 1920 in Fairbanks, Stroecker never called anywhere else home and when he passed he left a legacy through the **Bill Stroecker Foundation** which is designed to benefit the community for another 50 years.

Having never called anywhere else home, Bill did leave Fairbanks in 1938 to attend New Mexico Military Institute (NVMI). Then, near the end of World War II, Bill was stationed at Grand Prairie, Alberta, Canada as part of the Lend-Lease Program as he served time in the U.S. Army.



Following NVMI, Bill finished his education at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, graduating with a Business Administration degree, specializing in accounting. At that point he took a job at First National Bank as a bookkeeper and in 1967 succeeded his brother, Ed, as bank president.

Bill quickly became the face of Fairbanks from his post at Second and Cushman, eventually selling the bank in 1977 to Alaska Pacific Bank. Even then, Bill continued to serve as Vice President of Public Relations for the new owner and continued on in the same capacity with Key Bank who became the latest owner in 1985. Bill remained as VP for Public Relations until his passing in November, 2010.

Away from the office, Bill was known throughout the community by his wide variety of interests and interesting personal lifestyle. A common sight on a Fairbanks street would be Bill trudging to or from his downtown office adorned in a long raccoon coat and muskrat hat. Owner of a 1952 Studebaker pickup, with his distinctive long Yukon River flat-bottom boat in tow, he would be observed virtually every weekend leaving town to visit one of his 20-odd ‘bush’ recreational cabins.

Favorite activities included snowshoeing, sheep hunting, dip-netting, bird hunting, musical interests and service organizations where he devoted endless hours in particular to the Salvation Army of Fairbanks and the Alaska Goldpanners of Fairbanks amateur baseball team. Additionally, he backed numerous causes relating to Alaska lands, big game (serving on the Alaska

Guide Board among others), and petroleum issues - in particular with the discovery of oil on Alaska's North Slope in 1968.

The Salvation Army drew particular attention - and in event of dissolution of Bill Stroecker Foundation the approximate \$25 million fund would pass to the Army. Bill became the only 'life member' of the Fairbanks Salvation Army Board.

The Goldpanners were a natural for Bill as his father Ed (Dad) Stroecker was not only a Fairbanks Pioneer but is credited with founding the annual Midnight Sun Baseball Classic. The Midnight Sun Game was always a centerpiece for Bill, and he and his jazz trio known as 'Frigid-Aires' became a fixture with pre-game entertainment at the event.

H.A. (Red) Boucher approached Bill at the bank in 1962 seeking help in raising funds to send the fledgling Goldpanners of Fairbanks to the National Non-Pro Tournament in Wichita, KS. Not only was Bill drawn to baseball itself, but the idea of promoting Fairbanks and Alaska on a national stage struck him, immediately. "How much do you need?" Bill asked Boucher. Not only was that amount raised but Bill then gave the next 47 years of his life to leading the Goldpanners' Board of Directors - winning 46 consecutive one-year terms as president in the process.

The success of the Goldpanners in the amateur baseball world, and as a promotional figure for Fairbanks and Alaska has gone unmatched over the years and remained one of Bill's proudest achievements.

The list of civic undertakings for Bill is long. They include: Greater Fairbanks Hospital Foundation; Friends of the University of Alaska Museum; State of Alaska Guide Board; Alaska Banker's Association; Fairbanks Urban Beautification Commission; and numerous other advisory posts. Additionally, he received top honors from almost every one of the organizations to which he belonged or served, including mention at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY.

Bill joined Igloo No. 4 Pioneers of Alaska in 1951, earning life membership in 1976.

As public as his life was, Bill saved the most enjoyable times for himself, maybe with a few friends, and always along would be Bill's prized Labrador retrievers. At the time of his passing, Racey had been his faithful companion for some time. Bill obtained his first black Lab in 1944 and over the next 65 years he had one or more at all times. He took great pains in training the dogs and was active in the Fairbanks Retriever Club trials over the years.

Another passion for Bill was Alaskana. He acquired a great collection of items crafted in the villages and had a deep knowledge of the history of the state and Fairbanks area in particular. He spent time in his last few years holding

interviews with scholars writing about Alaska history with an emphasis on the unique lifestyle demanded by Fairbanks' remoteness and weather patterns.

Bill's grandfather, Charles N. Creamer, crossed the Chilkoot Trail in 1897 and in what Bill considered one of his major accomplishments, he retraced his grandfather's footsteps in 1997-at age 77 and some 100 years after his grandfather.

Bill never failed to get a twinkle in his eye when talking of his parents, grandparents, and others of pioneer times. Bill admitted to be joined to the past and liking it that way. Bill told endless stories of his father Eddie, and his mother Mattie Creamer Anderson Stroecker.

In establishing his Foundation through his last will & testament, Bill outlined 50 charities - mostly of Fairbanks - which he wished to see receive continuous support. He also left some wording allowing his named Board of Trustees to add others he had supported "on an ongoing basis" and even a few others if the seven Trustees could come to a unanimous vote. The number of organizations, including about a dozen of national standing, reached 65 in total.

In addition to Bill's devotion in time, energy and financial resources for The Salvation Army and the Goldpanners, Bill reserved the largest amount of his personal charity for the Summer Arts Festival - both to UAF and to Jo Scott's version - and The Community Food Bank; Fairbanks Rescue Mission; The Breadline; Fairbanks Concert Association; Judicial Watch; St. Matthews Church; Ducks Unlimited; United Way; and various educational institutions with primary emphasis on Hillsdale College.

The Marion Weeks Foundation also operated at the time of Bill's passing and continues to this day. He established that foundation in the early 1990s following the passing of his sister. Primary to the Weeks Foundation is controlling ownership of the renowned Stroecker Farm.

Bill married Eleanor Stolen Wagner in 1957 and while he had no children of his own, Bill warmly welcomed Eleanor's children by her previous marriage and their extended families. Bill was preceded by Eleanor and his companion at the time of his passing was Pat Marlin--a high school classmate at the old Fairbanks High School, class of 1938.

Written by Mr. Don Dennis, Bill Stroecker Foundation Trustee (6/8/2022)