EDJ The IEDC Economic Development Journal

734 15th Street, NW Suite 900 • Washington, DC 20005

Volume 13 / Number 3 / Summer 2014

"We Will Not Let This Place Dry Up and Blow Away"

By C. Mark Smith, FM, HLM

AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STORY

The rich history of IEDC and its predecessor organizations is filled with examples of how individuals – some well-known and some unknown – have contributed in major ways to the economic growth and future success of their communities. Too often, these contributions go unrecognized and the lessons learned from their accomplishments remain unlearned because we never knew of them.

This is the story of Sam Volpentest – son of immigrants, grocery salesman, tavern owner, community cheerleader, economic developer, lobbyist, political insider, and community icon – who fought to save his community from "drying up and blowing away." In recognition of his efforts, he received IEDC's Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Economic Development at the age of 100.

"we will not let
THIS PLACE DRY UP AND BLOW AWAY"

By C. Mark Smith, FM, HLM

The doctor's diagnosis was devastating. Fifty-three-year-old Sam Volpentest had a rare form of cancer of the jaw and perhaps less than a month to live. It was a defining moment that changed the direction of his life and the future of his adopted community of Richland, Washington. His recovery was difficult – eight painful operations between 1957 and 1963, radiation therapy, and a new lower jaw fabricated with bone from his hip – but he would live to fight other battles, saving and shaping the future of his community.

It was my honor to present Sam with IEDC's Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Economic Development at a community gala on the occasion of his 100th birthday in 2004. I had come to know and admire him because his adopted community had also become mine. By that time he was a community icon, both respected and feared, a man with powerful friends and legendary accomplishments, who came to work every day, even at his advanced age. I knew the broad outline of his many accomplishments, but I would later come to realize, after I wrote a book about him, that Sam Volpentest's story was more amazing than I had ever imagined.

THE EARLY YEARS – Honing Sales Skills and Personal Contacts

He was born in Seattle in 1904 to poor Italian immigrants. His father, Rosario Volpentesta, changed his name to Volpentest upon arrival at Ellis Island and worked as a day laborer and a boot black in a downtown Seattle barber shop. His mother was a midwife and worked as a laundress.

C. Mark Smith (right) presents Sam Volpentest with IEDC's Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Economic Development at a community gala on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

Young Sam Volpentest was a small man with big dreams – street-smart, ambitious, and strong-willed. He was determined to become a success in life. He began to work at the age of 10 to help support his family but found enough spare time to become one of Seattle's first Eagle Scouts in 1921. Always interested in music, he founded one of Seattle's original radio dance bands. He worked full-time from the age of 17 – first as a clerk, and then as a star salesman – for a pioneer Seattle wholesale grocer, selling tinned coffee and vegetables on a set route in downtown Seattle that included restaurants, speakeasies, and corner grocery stores.

C. Mark Smith, FM, HLM, spent 40 years managing economic development organizations at the federal, state and local level. He spent 25 of those years serving on the boards of the Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED), the American Economic Development Council (AEDC), and the International Economic Development Council (IEDC).

He is the author of numerous articles in professional journals and, more recently, is the author of two books of political biography. His latest is *Community Godfather: How Sam Volpentest shaped the history of Hanford and the Tri-Cities*. (cmsmith@earthlink.net)

AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STORY

The rich history of IEDC and its predecessor organizations is filled with examples of how individuals – some well-known and some unknown – have contributed in major ways to the economic growth and future success of their communities. Too often, these contributions go unrecognized and the lessons learned from their accomplishments remain unlearned because we never knew of them.

This is the story of Sam Volpentest – son of immigrants, grocery salesman, tavern owner, community cheerleader, economic developer, lobbyist, political insider, and community icon – who fought to save his community from "drying up and blowing away." In recognition of his efforts, he received IEDC's Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Economic Development at the age of 100.

Over the next 22 years, he honed his sales skills and personal contacts, not only surviving, but prospering through the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and the years leading up to World War II. Everyone remembered his vice-like handshake that pulled the normally taller recipient toward him and off balance. Sam once asked to see the business card of the son of a friend who had just started in business. Looking at it, he asked the young man if he owned a paper punch. He proceeded to punch a hole in the card. The young man, incredulous, asked why. "When you hand your card with a hole in it to someone, they will invariably ask you about the hole. That will allow you to make your sales pitch, and they will have asked for it."

As a young man, he idolized his favorite uncle, a smalltime bootlegger, gambler, and club manager, who was well known in Seattle's private club and after hour's scene. The uncle managed the Italian Club, a hangout for business leaders of Seattle's small Italian community. Its fine dining room and convivial bar attracted many of the city's aspiring politicians, including Albert Rosellini and Warren G. Magnuson.

Sam Volpentest's success as a hot-shot wholesale grocery salesman is evident in this 1925 family photo.

A state legislator who would be elected governor of Washington in 1956, Rosellini was the first Italian-American and Roman Catholic to be elected governor of a state west of the Mississippi River. Magnuson, known to all as "Maggie," was a future congressman and U.S. senator who would chair both the Senate Commerce and Appropriations Committees and become President pro tempore of the Senate.

Volpentest never forgot Magnuson's admonition that "the closest path to a politician is through your own wallet." Beginning in the mid-1950s, he began to raise money for Magnuson and Rosellini as well as for Washington's new junior senator, Henry M. Jackson. The men became close friends and political allies.

The women's barracks at Camp Hanford, Christmas 1944. Fifty-one thousand workers lived there while Hanford was being built.

The remoteness of the area, its cold, clean river water, the abundant electricity produced by recently-completed hydro-electric dams, and its small population were just what the U.S. Army was looking for when it selected 670 square miles along a wide bend in the Columbia River as the site for the Hanford Engineer Works, an industrial complex where plutonium would be produced for the atomic bomb.

HANFORD ENGINEER WORKS – Producing Plutonium for the Atomic Bomb

Today, the Tri-Cities Metropolitan Area – consisting of the contiguous cities of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland, and located in southeastern Washington state – is a fast-growing, economically diversified region known for its fine wine and tech-based economy. But it wasn't always like that.

In mid-1943, the region was a rural backwater still inhabited by Indians and a few thousand farmers, orchardists, and ranchers who eked out a living from their arid shrub steppe lands along the banks of the Snake, Yakima, and Columbia rivers. The remoteness of the area, its cold, clean river water, the abundant electricity produced by recently-completed hydro-electric dams, and its small population were just what the U.S. Army was looking for when it selected 670 square miles along a wide bend in the Columbia River as the site for the Hanford Engineer Works, an industrial complex where plutonium would be produced for the atomic bomb.

Within a year, the original residents had been displaced, the land appropriated by the government, and 51,000 construction workers, recruited mostly from the south and mid-west, were building three nuclear reactors and more than 500 other buildings on the site. Most of the workers lived in Hanford Camp, a massive complex of barracks and support facilities that most resembled a prisoner of war camp. Administrators,

The Hanford B Reactor after its completion in 1944. It produced the plutonium used in the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki the following year. The Columbia River is in the background.

scientists, and senior engineers lived and worked in a new, planned community of "alphabet" houses, dormitories, and administrative buildings in Richland Village, located approximately 20 miles south of the reactors.

Built over the original Richland town site, the gated and fenced community was owned and operated by the army and its primary contractor, E. I. du Pont de Nemours. Security was tight, and most of the workers' families had no idea what their husbands and fathers did each day. It became the subject of jokes. A cartoon in the weekly newspaper showed one small boy saying to another, "I know what they make at the Hanford Site. It's toilet paper, because every day my dad brings home a couple of rolls in his lunch box."

Hanford's fortunes waned after the end of World War II and then picked up again to meet the needs of the Cold War. Sam Volpentest arrived in 1949, responding to a blind ad in the *Seattle Times* seeking potential business owners willing to locate in a new strip mall the army was building to address Richland's appalling lack of retail businesses. Sam wanted to open a grocery store but settled for a tavern when he learned that the grocery store had already been promised to another. The weather was hot, the workers were thirsty, and Sam was a good listener. His tavern prospered, and he bought several more.

A LIFE-CHANGING EVENT

By the mid-1950s, Sam had become convinced that Richland would never grow so long as it was owned and operated by the federal government. He became active in local efforts to incorporate Richland and force the government to sell their land and buildings to the residents. He didn't know it at the time, but the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and their new prime contractor, General Electric, had also come to the conclusion that administering atomic communities was more trouble than it was worth. One man who helped them reach that conclusion was Washington's junior senator, Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson.

With Washington Governor Albert Rosellini (r) in 1963. When Sam served as president of Seattle's Italian Club in 1938, Rosellini served as his vice-president.

As a congressman, Jackson had been a protégé of Sam Rayburn, the powerful Speaker of the House of Representatives. He was given a seat on the important Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and held a keen interest in the AEC and in Hanford. Sam, a lifelong Democrat, appreciated Jackson's efforts and began raising money for him during his 1956 reelection campaign.

Sam Volpentest's cancer changed his life. No longer able to work in his taverns because of a draining wound from his jaw, his physical inactivity and the continuing pain and disfigurement resulting from multiple operations, led to bouts of severe depression. Concerned, his wife contacted the influential publisher of the local *Tri-City Herald* and asked if he couldn't find something for Sam to do. Sam was recruited to help in the fight to incorporate Richland and to sell its buildings to their occupants.

He attacked his new challenge with his characteristic energy and salesmanship. Incorporation was finally achieved in July 1958 after 12 years of controversy. In recognition of his efforts, he was named chairman of the "Commencement Day" celebration and then elected president of the nascent Richland Chamber of Commerce in 1960.

A COMMUNITY VISION AND THREE PROJECTS

In his acceptance speech to the chamber of commerce, Sam laid out a community vision and listed three specific projects that he saw as necessary to implement that vision. The first was to win *Look* magazine's prestigious "All-America City" award. He organized the campaign and helped make the city's presentation. Approximately a year later, his picture was in the *Tri-City Herald* – his jaw still swathed in bandages from a recent operation – pointing up to a sign that proclaimed, "Welcome to Richland: All-America City."

The Richland Federal Building, which Sam secured with the help of Senator Warren Magnuson in 1962, nears completion in 1964.

Sam's second goal was to improve the transportation access to his remotely-located community. He proposed a 29-mile highway across the Hanford Site and a new bridge over the Columbia River – then served by a six-car ferry – that would significantly decrease the time it took to drive to Seattle and Spokane. With the help of his old friend, Albert Rosellini, now governor, he helped convince the state legislature, which sought support for building a section of interstate highway through Seattle in time for the Seattle World's Fair, to support a compromise which allowed both projects to be built.

But it was Sam's third goal that attracted the most attention. The Tri-Cities was almost totally dependent on Hanford for both its direct and indirect jobs. Any government decision that would reduce the activity at Hanford would devastate the community. He was looking for something that would assure the local residents that the

federal government was not going to abandon them if the work at Hanford slowed down. He had just the right project in mind – a massive new federal building – and he knew just whom to ask for it.

In 1962, his old friend, Warren Magnuson, was a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. He explained that new federal buildings normally took 15 years or more to get funding authorized and appropriated, and a new building built. But these were not normal times. Magnuson was up for reelection and facing a particularly difficult Republican challenger.

Sam went to work raising campaign contributions from local businessmen (mostly Republicans), and Hanford contractors and labor unions reminding them of the many ways that Magnuson could help the community and of his own close personal connections to the senator. In the middle of the campaign, Magnuson announced that funds had been appropriated for a new seven-story, $8.2 million, federal building in Richland. Sam later said, "I don't know how he did it, and I didn't ask."

Sam first met John F. Kennedy during the Washington state Democratic convention in 1958. He convinced him to come to Hanford to dedicate the n Reactor's companion steam generating plant in 1963.

SELLING MEMBERSHIPS IN A NEW ORGANIZATION

In August 1963, President John F. Kennedy agreed to a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union. The treaty prohibited atmospheric testing, initiated a system of verifications and controls, and greatly reduced the need to continue to produce plutonium. Kennedy was assassinated before all of the provisions of the test ban treaty could be implemented and impact the production facilities at Hanford. However, that didn't stop the flow of rumors forecasting the community's impending doom.

Sam and two other local businessmen, Glenn C. Lee and Robert F. Philip, both Republicans and the owners of the influential *Tri-City Herald*, often heard the rumors during their frequent trips to Washington. Expressing their concerns and the growing sense of community panic to Senators Jackson and Magnuson, they were referred to a consultant who was familiar with the AEC and experienced in helping other communities diversify their local economies. The only problem was that there was no money available to pay his fee.

Based on information they obtained from the consultant and from other communities in Washington state, they decided to create a local economic development organization in February 1963. They called it the Tri-Cities Nuclear Industrial Council (TCNIC). Sam was its unpaid executive and set out to sell memberships in the new organization. Before long, he had raised the $25,000 necessary to hire the consultant.

Based on information they obtained from the consultant and from other communities in Washington state, they decided to create a local economic development organization in February 1963. They called it the Tri-Cities Nuclear Industrial Council (TCNIC). Sam was its unpaid executive and set out to sell memberships in the new organization. Before long, he had raised the $25,000 necessary to hire the consultant.

Volpentest, Lee, and Philip decided on four goals for the new organization. They included:

1. Conducting "a careful assessment of the present and potential resources of the area, particularly those derived from nuclear or related technologies;
2. Considering new governmental programs and private enterprise activities best suited to employ those resources, and stimulating efforts to attract them to the area;
3. Taking steps to focus the attention of private and public organizations on the potential uses of these resources; and
4. Carrying out a pilot program to interest qualified enterprises in new undertakings in the Tri-City region."

TCNIC's small board of directors consisted largely of trusted friends and business leaders. In order to control their message and to limit unwanted participation, small businessmen, women, and local government officials were excluded. There was only token representation from organized labor. Community support for TCNIC was far from unanimous. The three small local chambers of commerce were suspicious of it, believing that it would undercut their local small business membership base.

Sam Volpentest and Glenn Lee also had their local detractors, but for different reasons. Sam's always profane, hard-driving personality and take-no-prisoners style of fundraising had turned many in the community against him, while Lee's no less aggressive personality, plus his reputation as a union-busting martinet, hardly endeared him to Hanford's organized labor unions.

When the consultant's report was received, it was not very optimistic. General Electric, Hanford's prime contractor, was unwilling to welcome other contractors to the site or to share their research facilities. Working with

an agreeable Senator Jackson, Sam and his supporters applied pressure on the AEC to divide up GE's contract into smaller components and to require that new contractors invest in local non-Hanford-related projects as the price of being awarded a lucrative Hanford contract. At the same time, TCNIC promoted higher education, improved highway access and better air service, and was influential in creating a new visitor and convention bureau.

SAVING THE COMMUNITY

The news they had been dreading arrived on the night of January 8, 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson delivered his first State of the Union message. Tucked in between the praise of John Kennedy's legacy, the battle for civil rights, the War on Poverty, a federal tax cut, government frugality, and military cutbacks – was the news that would impact Hanford for the next decade: "We must not stockpile arms beyond our needs or seek an excess of military power that could be provocative as well as wasteful."

Johnson's announcement amounted to a 25 percent reduction in the amount of plutonium produced and the loss of 2,000 jobs, but that was soon expanded to include the shutdown of all eight Hanford reactors over the next decade and the potential loss of most of the Tri-Cities work force. Sam was defiant, telling a reporter, "We're not going to let this place dry up and blow away."

Two weeks later, General Electric announced that it would be leaving as Hanford's contractor and that the $1.4 billion in nuclear reactors and related facilities, as well as the additional $80 million in laboratory facilities currently being operated by GE, would be re-bid and turned over to new contractors. Not surprisingly, the community viewed the twin announcements as a full-fledged disaster. TCNIC, the community's newly formed economic development organization, was unproven and virtually unknown.

To help ease local community concerns and give TCNIC more standing, he worked with Senator Jackson to arrange a high-profile visit by Dr. Glenn Seaborg, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and several powerful U.S. senators to the Tri-Cities in early February 1963. The visit resulted in the outline of a strategy to save the community. Studies were commissioned to look at which Hanford facilities and technologies might lend themselves to being sold to private industry.

The AEC and senators agreed to promote Hanford with other government agencies. At the same time, they would see what could be done to slow down the pace of the reactor closures, which were being driven by the Bureau of the Budget and the White House. TCNIC was also granted unusually direct access to officials in Washington, D.C., and the plan to split up the Hanford contract and to require that new contractors fund local projects unrelated to their Hanford work was implemented.

The process of recruiting new contractors to Hanford began almost immediately. When they arrived for a visit, Sam's sales pitch was always the same: the availability of existing nuclear and research facilities at Hanford, an unparalleled pool of nuclear construction workers and expertise, a surplus of trained nuclear operators, a community that embraced nuclear energy, inexpensive land and cheap electric power, the recreational benefits of the Columbia River, and the area's mild climate.

He also never failed to mention his connection to the state's powerful senators, or that his personal influence with them might be useful in resolving any problems associated with a company coming to Hanford. When one potential contractor sent him an unsolicited check to act on their behalf, he sent it back.

The slow drip of reactor closure announcements continued throughout the 1960s. Each announcement resulted in a new round of community pessimism. People left town. Consumer spending declined. Bankruptcies soared. Each announced shutdown raised the question of how the lost jobs would be replaced.

Johnson's announcement amounted to a 25 percent reduction in the amount of plutonium produced and the loss of 2,000 jobs, but that was soon expanded to include the shutdown of all eight Hanford reactors over the next decade and the potential loss of most of the Tri-Cities work force. Sam was defiant, telling a reporter, "We're not going to let this place dry up and blow away."

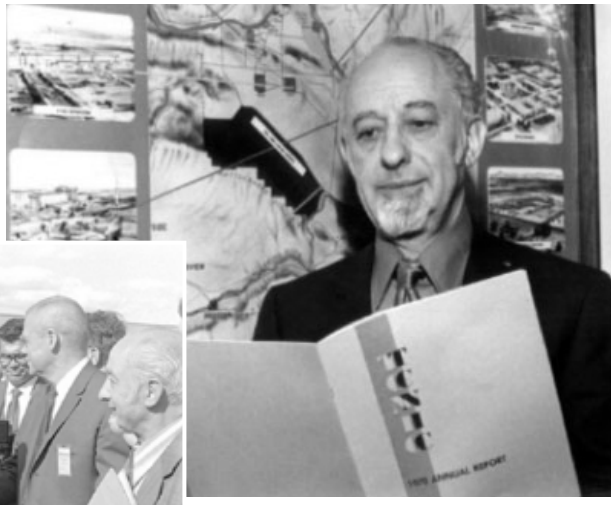
Sam's response was that the Hanford site should become an integrated nuclear energy park with as many as 20 nuclear power reactors, along with all their associated support facilities, producing enough electric power to export to California and throughout the west. The resulting financial windfall would be used to support the growth and economic diversification of the local community. One potential solution to the closures – managing and cleaning up the nuclear waste – wasn't much discussed, and when it was, didn't seem to be a realistic alternative to him and a community full of dedicated nuclear supporters.

Still an unpaid volunteer at TCNIC, he pursued other business interests, including real estate development, banking, and an early computer startup company, while still working roughly 60 hours a week on behalf of TCNIC – a tall order for a man now in his sixties. By the end of the decade, Sam Volpentest was seen both by his community and by officials in Washington, D.C. as a force to be reckoned with, a reputation he worked hard to burnish during the following decades. Not everyone liked his style, but it was hard to argue with what he had achieved. His was the constant and energetic voice promoting the Tri-Cities economy.

The new Hanford contractors were largely in place by 1965. Their ability to create non-Hanford jobs and invest in the broader community produced uneven results. Even when new projects were successful, as in the case of a new hotel in Richland and a large meat-packing plant, the jobs that were created did not pay the wages or provide the benefits of those that had been lost with the shutdown of the reactors. One major exception was Battelle's acquisition of the old GE Research Laboratories. Battelle acquired 275 acres for their new campus and spent $12 million on new buildings. By 1967, they had 2,600 scientists, engineers, and researchers working on a broad array of scientific research.

Sam always took credit for bringing Battelle to the Tri-Cities. It is true that he lobbied them both in Columbus and in New York City. But as such things often happen in the economic development business, it turned out that Battelle's president had graduated from the University of Washington and was looking for a Pacific Northwest location.

President Richard Nixon, Washington Governor Dan Evans, Tri-City Herald publisher Glenn C. Lee, and Sam during Nixon's September 26, 1971, visit to break ground for the Fast Flux Test Reactor. Volpentest was no fan of Nixon's, but he took control of the ceremony to better showcase the Tri-Cities.



A traditional economic developer for TCNIC, using pictures and local economic reports to pitch the "Miracle in the Desert" to new businesses in 1970.

"DON'T EVER BE AFRAID TO DREAM"

Between 1965 and 1985, Sam engaged in a series of efforts to attract new missions to Hanford. Again, he worked closely with Senators Jackson and Magnuson and with House Speaker Tom Foley, who represented Washington's Fifth District, cutting deals with powerful senators and congressmen from other states. He became the region's indispensable lobbyist, making as many as 20 trips a year to the nation's capital at his own expense. Now in his 70s, Sam was still an exceptional salesman. His remarkable energy, arts of persuasion, infallible memory, and dogged persistence were seen as being even more effective because people knew he wasn't being paid for his efforts. Congressman Norm Dicks told me, "It was never about Sam. It was always about his community, and that was a powerful message."

The two decades between 1965 and 1985 saw major changes at Hanford. The production reactors were gone. Efforts to attract major new programs like the 200 BeV Accelerator, breeder reactors, uranium enrichment plants, and a new underground storage facility for nuclear waste all failed as they fell prey to politics, huge cost overruns, and changing national priorities. Existing programs, like the multipurpose N Reactor and liquid sodium-powered Fast Flux Test Facility, reached the end of their usefulness or were unable to attract new missions.

The Three Mile Island and, later, the Chernobyl nuclear disasters played into the public's growing concerns about the safety of nuclear energy, which were already being fanned by environmentalists, social activists, and anti-nuclear politicians. Not surprisingly, Volpentest saw these forces as enemies who threatened the livelihood of thousands of Hanford workers and the future of the Tri-Cities economy, potentially undoing his years of hard work and effort. Yet, he refused to give up hope. "Don't ever be afraid to dream," he would say. "He was," one associate remembered, "like a lead horse with blinders on."

He continued to fight for his vision of a nuclear energy park at Hanford. He thought that the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS), which was attempting to build five new nuclear power plants at the same time – three of them at Hanford – was the answer to his dream. However, the effort was clearly beyond the agency's capability. Mismanagement, technical difficulties, labor problems, growing anti-nuclear sentiment, and a massive debt load finally led WPPSS to default on $2.25 billion in bonds and lay off more than 5,000 workers, ending Sam's dream of a nuclear energy park at Hanford.

TIME FOR A NEW APPROACH – New Voices Demanding to Be Heard

By 1985, the combination of a recent national recession, lost projects, and the collapse of WPPSS led to an economic crisis in the Tri-Cities that was every bit as intense and painful as the one in 1963. Regardless of Sam's and TCNIC's efforts, the Tri-Cities remained as dependent on Hanford as ever. It was time for a new approach.

TCNIC was no longer able to deal with the crisis. There were too many new voices demanding to be heard. Local governments, the chambers of commerce, environmental groups, agribusiness, and organized labor all demanded a seat at the table. Sam opposed these calls because he believed that the real power and money in the community still rested with the Hanford contractors and that expanding the local economic development effort would result in blurring the message. "We have to speak with one voice," he said.

With Senators Henry M. Jackson (left) and Warren G. Magnuson at the height of their legislative powers in 1980.

But by 1985 both Senators Magnuson and Jackson were gone. His longtime ally, the *Tri-City Herald*, had been sold to new owners. Sam's was just one voice, however respected and influential, and he got outvoted and the decision was made to create a new broadly-based economic development organization which would engage in a broad spectrum of economic development and diversification activities. In May 1985, TCNIC acquired the debt, assets, and membership of the largest of the local chambers of commerce, reinventing itself as the Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Development Council (TRIDEC). Sam insisted that the word "nuclear" be retained in the title.

His objections to the formation of TRIDEC were overcome by creating a paid executive vice president position that left him in sole charge of all Hanford-related activities and government lobbying. A new president would be hired to handle everything else. For the first time, Sam would be paid for his efforts.

The new TRIDEC board brought together for the first time and at the same table all of the suspicions, distrusts, animosities, and competing community and economic interests that had been building in the Tri-Cities for the past 25 years. Hanford interests, local business interests, agribusiness interests, and the units of local government – themselves badly fragmented – held widely differing views about what the organization should become.

There were complaints from the other organizations that were still not represented at TRIDEC's table. The chambers, still upset by the merger, complained when TRIDEC handled business leads they felt they had first developed. Mike Schwenk, TRIDEC's new president, solved this by creating a new Case Management Committee, where representatives of all the local economic development organizations gathered once a month to discuss current leads and available properties. Sam continued to control the agenda of a newly created Hanford Programs Committee. Because it dealt with the community response to the Hanford budget and sensitive lobbying issues, no other board members were permitted to attend its meetings.

Gradually, TRIDEC's transition problems and the health of the local economy began to resolve themselves. TRIDEC completed two highly successful community fundraising campaigns and expanded their services to include entrepreneurial development and business assistance and recruitment of non-Hanford businesses to the community.

Sam's longstanding interests in improved highway access and air service led to the Tri-Cities finally being included on the interstate highway system. With TRIDEC's help, a new air terminal was built. A branch campus of Washington State University was located in north Richland, near the Battelle campus and the offices of the major Hanford contractors.

Ever pragmatic, he learned to work with new political allies, including a number of Republicans. His effectiveness on Capitol Hill remained undiminished, helped along considerably by the relative cohesiveness of the Washington delegation and by what came to be known as the "legend of Sam," in which stories of his legendary exploits were passed down from elected officials to their staff, some of whom were ultimately elected to Congress themselves.

CLEANING UP THE HANFORD SITE – Unanticipated Consequences

By the late 1980s, it was clear that Hanford would have to change forever from a production mode to a cleanup mode. After intense negotiations that lasted almost a year, the Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Washington State signed what became known as the Tri-Party Agreement. For the first time, the agreement set certain milestones and time frames for cleaning up the site and treating the approximately 56 million gallons of nuclear waste that had been accumulating for 40 years. The cleanup of the Hanford site progressed slowly at first and a great deal of money was wasted as DOE struggled to embrace a cleanup mentality and to develop the new technology that was required.

The Tri-Party Agreement led to a number of unanticipated consequences, but the largest was the positive impact that the injection of between one and two billion dollars a year would have on the Tri-Cities economy. Sam was not convinced at first, considering cleanup jobs of lesser importance than the jobs they were replacing. "These are not the kind of jobs we need," he said. But as cleanup efforts progressed, and the money flowed, even he could see the obvious benefits to the community.

WORKING IN HIS 90s

Some of Sam's most effective economic development work took place when he was in his 90s. In 1994, he helped broker an agreement between Battelle's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) and the Department of Energy to locate the 200,000-square-foot, $230 million Environmental Molecular Science Laboratory on the campus of PNNL.

With the help of his new political allies in Washington, he also found $365 million to fund the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) on the

The sprawling Volpentest HAMMER Education and Training Facility. It was Sam's favorite project.

Hanford site. LIGO was designed to detect gravitational waves that were believed to have originated hundreds of millions of light years away during the dawn of the universe. It was the largest project ever funded by the National Science Foundation.

Sam's last project was also his favorite. The $30 million Volpentest HAMMER (Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response) Education and Training Facility provided realistic training for thousands of Hanford workers who were transitioning to cleanup. It was also one of the most difficult projects to fund. He helped forge a partnership among the federal government, national labor unions, and Hanford contractors to fund the facility. In recognition of his efforts, the facility was named for him. "It was the most important project I ever worked on," he said.

The manager of DOE's Richland Operations Office announces that they had re-named the main highway through the Hanford Site Volpentest Boulevard.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO HIS COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

As he approached his tenth decade, Sam had become a living legend. He still drove to work at TRIDEC every day – his head barely visible behind the steering wheel of his Oldsmobile 98 sedan. His annual birthday parties attracted hundreds of people. Seven hundred attended his 100th birthday party, when IEDC presented him with its Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement.

The story of Sam's life teaches us several lessons as economic developers. You don't always have to be right, but you have to be wrong for the right reasons. You have to believe in your product and in yourself. His story reminds us that the one constant we all face in personal and professional lives is change. Successful communities grow when they experience the happy combination of conditions that provide the potential for economic growth, a community vision, and community leaders who are committed to that vision and who, like Sam, are determined not to "let our community dry up and blow away" in the face of adversity. Finally, Sam's life reminds us that one person – even the most unlikely among us – can make a real difference to the future of our community.