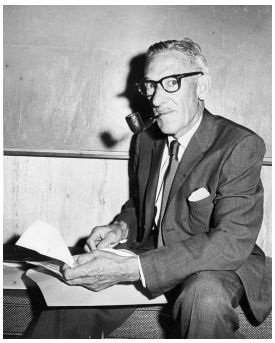
Glenn Jackson (1902-1980)



Recognized as one of Oregon's most influential figures of the twentieth century, Glenn Jackson left his mark through public service and corporate leadership. He was born in Albany, Oregon, on April 27, 1902, to W.L. Jackson, co-publisher of the *Albany Democrat Herald*, and Minnie Jackson, a school teacher. Although he was expelled from high school and admitted to Oregon Agricultural College (today's Oregon State University) on a provisional basis, he graduated with a degree in commerce in 1925.

Jackson joined the California-Oregon Power Company (COPCO) as an electricity salesman in Medford and quickly moved up the corporate ranks. His career was interrupted by World War II. Rising to the rank of colonel, he served in Italy and France and was awarded the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit.

After the war, Jackson returned to Medford and COPCO, where he became chairman of the board after COPCO merged with Pacific Power & Light in 1971. He was also a director of Standard Insurance Company, the U.S. National Bank of Oregon, Fred Meyer, Inc., and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He developed White City, an industrial and residential park, on the site of Camp White near Medford.

Jackson and his sister inherited a majority interest in the *Albany Democrat Herald* in 1949. He later bought out minority owner Ralph Cronise and built the company to include the *Ashland Daily Tidings* and eight local weeklies in Oregon. While Jackson focused on Pacific Power and his many civic endeavors, he left the day-to-day operation of the newspapers to their managing editors. Capital Cities Communications acquired the company in 1980.

A Republican, Jackson supported both Republicans and Democrats for state offices. He was widely recognized as a power broker whose advice was regularly sought by aspiring and active politicians. He played an important behind-the-scenes role in several administrations, especially that of Tom McCall.

Jackson is best known in Oregon for his twenty years as a member of the Oregon State Highway Commission and its successor, the Oregon Transportation Commission. First appointed by Governor Mark Hatfield in 1959, he was named chair in 1962 and reappointed by Governors Tom McCall and Robert Straub. In that role, Jackson directed the planning and construction of 700 miles of freeway and more than 800 bridges, including the Fremont, Astoria, and Marquam.

Despite his leadership of the massive highway program, Jackson anticipated that building enough roads and parking spaces would eventually become impossible, and he became an advocate for mass transit. His service on the Transportation Commission was recognized by naming the Highway 205 bridge over the Columbia River after him**.**

Jackson's commitment to Oregon's livability was expressed in the parks that were a byproduct of freeway construction. After the passage of Senate Bill 100, Oregon's landmark land-use law, he joined Governor McCall and others to found 1000 Friends of Oregon, an organization dedicated to the protection of Oregon's quality of life through land-use planning. When he appointed Jackson to the Economic Development Commission in 1979, Governor Vic Atiyeh said: "I wanted to send a signal out. I want to create an excitement for business already here in Oregon as well as those from outside that the environment and economy can be balanced, it doesn't have to be one-sided." Jackson believed the state should measure the economic impact of environmental regulations and get the "coordination and cooperation" of state agencies to aid business and industry.

At Jackson's death in 1980, an *Oregonian* editorial noted: "Jackson probably devoted more voluntary service to Oregon

than any citizen before or since statehood, yet he would not accept even expense money for his work. His personal stature, his reputation for avoiding self-dealing, and the lack of scandal in the departments he supervised enabled most Oregonians to feel their lives would be enhanced by his actions." While never interested in public office himself, Glenn Jackson played a key role in the progressive policies Oregon adopted during the 1960s and 1970s.

Written by Barbara Mahoney

Further Reading:

"Glenn Jackson: He Knows the Use of Power." *Albany Democrat Herald*, April 6, 1979.

"Politicians Praise Jackson." *Eugene Register Guard*, June 22, 1980.

Radhuber, S.G. "Glenn Jackson: There's a Man Behind the Myth." *Northwest Magazine*, March 20, 1977.

White, Maggi. "Glenn L. Jackson: King of the Road." *HOME Magazine*, July 13, 1966.

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