

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Lou Herwaldt, 2009, Leon S. Peters recipient. Lou, you join the ranks of the Earl Smittcamps, the Sam Reeves, the Helen Smades, pillars of our community which is very well deserved for you to be named by the Fresno Chamber of Commerce as the recipient of this 2009 award. You've lived in the community a long time. Can you give us a little bit of background, where did you grow up, where did you go to school, and then later on we'll get into how you got involved with philanthropy and community activities. Where did you grow up?

>>Lou Herwaldt: I grew up in Maywood, Illinois, which is about 12 miles from Chicago. And I grew up; I was born in 1932, right during the Depression. And 1941 was the World War II. I have five older brothers and they went in the service, and all five of them were in the service during World War II. I was about 9 years old then, and my dad had a shoe repair shop in Chicago. And so I at 9 and 10 years old I helped him in the shoe repair shop, he didn't have anybody else left in the family. They were all gone in the service. So I grew up in Chicago. At the end of the war, 1945, we moved to Fresno. So that was my up bringing, and I went -- did all my grade school, first grade to eighth grade, in Maywood, Illinois, and when we moved to Fresno I was in the ninth grade and went to Edison High School.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: All right, so you were an Edison Tiger.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Edison Tiger. Graduated in 1950. Excuse me.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: In those days there were essentially three high schools, Roosevelt, Fresno High and Edison, and Edison probably then was -- was one of the schools that had one of the most diverse populations. They had Russians and Germans and Italians, and all kinds of --

>>Lou Herwaldt: All kinds of -- all kinds and we got along really well together. It was a nice time. It was a great time to live in the city of Fresno. It was a smaller community at that time. And we enjoyed coming here. My dad had asthma so we had to leave Chicago to come to Fresno where it's a dryer place. And so it was a -- a time of finding our way.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Well, probably close to your period of time there at Edison, Sam Iacobellis with the I guess the -- was one of the creators of the B-1 -- he was in Edison --

>>Lou Herwaldt: He was a great football player.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Great football player and --

>>Lou Herwaldt: Johnny Morris.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Johnny Morris. So you had some real great classmates.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Yes, it was an interesting school.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Well, you've seen a lot about Fresno, then. I mean, you --

>>Lou Herwaldt: Been here a long time.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Been here a long time, and certainly everybody knows who you are, and your activism in the community and we'll talk about that, that later on. So after you graduated from high school then what did you decide to do?

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well, I didn't plan on going to college. My dad and mother were both born in Russia. They came here when my dad was 7. And so his desire for me as his son was to get a job out of high school and go to work. Well, I did that. I did that very well, I guess, because as soon as I graduated from high school I went to work at Fred Kurz Ford. And then about six months later I went to work for Prior and Shelton, Ray Prior and Ted Shelton, you probably know them. They were nice men that took me under their wings and taught me a lot about the car business. So I started it, working in the parts department, and then Frank J. Sanders bought it in 1954. I became a service manager and a sales manager and a general manager. And in 1969 there was an opportunity in Fresno, the Chrysler Plymouth dealership wasn't doing well, and the Chrysler Plymouth Corporation was going to change the dealer in that facility. I was taking Nick Ferrante back to work one day. He was working at Security Bank. And I asked him if he ever -- my wife and I were thinking about somehow getting in business for ourselves, having spent 19 years learning the car business we knew it pretty well. And so he called me about two weeks later and he said I -- I think I can get an interview for you with Chrysler Corporation, and maybe you can become the Chrysler Plymouth dealer in Fresno. So I went up there about 4 o'clock one afternoon, and I -- they interviewed me for three or four or five hours, and they said I was going to be the next Chrysler Plymouth dealer. The only problem is we didn't have any money. At that time the companies, Chrysler and General Motors and Ford had money. Today they're struggling in their business, but they provided the money for me, the capital. And so they allow you to buy that out from the profits of the business. And we ran it fairly successful and took on Mazda in 1971. And from there on we've had about ten different franchises. And so we learned the business from the ground up, and it was a big asset to work 19 years in every department in the car business. It allowed me to acquire that because they saw the stability that I had and they granted me something without the money and provided the funds. And I was able to buy them out in a short period of time.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Like your father, my grandparents were Greek immigrants. And I remember them coming -- they came to Fresno and they used to say the only thing you have of real value is your reputation.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Right.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: At the end of the day, your name. And certainly Lou, and I'm not patronizing you, your name not only in the car industry but in the community has been one of honesty, one of integrity, one of truly caring about the -- not only the community, but caring about your -- an interest in other things other than the automobile interest. I mean, lot of people associate Lou Herwaldt, that name is known throughout the valley in terms of the automobile industry. And certainly as you pointed out, you worked from the ground up. You knew every -- it's the classic textbook of someone who started at the bottom and owned a dealership, which was a major accomplishment. But let's -- let's talk a little bit about how you got involved in other areas. I know I can start in with the Metropolitan Museum; I can start in with many, many things that we looked at today that many people enjoy as a benefit of your involvement on boards and philanthropy. The Leon S. Peters Award, and I know you knew Leon S. Peters, stands for not only success in business, which you can check that off, but more importantly community involvement and about caring about your fellow men. How did you get involved with that, who taught you that, what was the nexus of that?

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well, it's a longer story than probably we have time for. But when you're in business for yourself and it's succeeding, you're doing fairly well; people come to you and ask you to get involved in certain things. Well,

Paul Fansler, that one you knew very well, he was always involved with UCP, United Cerebral Palsy. And I was a good friend of his. And he asked me to become a part of that. And from that other things happened. I was asked to join the Rotary, North Fresno Rotary, Frank Wenter and Joe Fields they came and asked us, took my wife and me out to dinner, ask us if we wouldn't want to be a part of North Fresno Rotary. And from there, doors began to open. You know, I saw that - I didn't know anything about Rotary, coming from Edison High and being in a little shoe repair shop, and then not going to college. But I saw that service above self, that was something that registered in my mind -- and that my father had already taught me. So I got involved, and when people ask me if I would do this, if I would do that, if I would serve here, if I would give to this. It was easy to say yes. Because I was so blessed, my wife and I, we have two children. The blessings were flowing. And so we were taught if you're blessed to bless others. And the doors began to open. And Frank got me into -- Frank Wenter, Bud Richter was very instrumental in opening a lot of doors for me. He walked the road that I walked prior to me walking it. And so when Leon S. Peters died in 1983 they asked me to serve on the Community Hospital Board. Jim Mayer was the chairman of the board and then Bud Richter, and then I was the chairman of the board. And so I can appreciate what Leon S. Peters did for our community. Not only was he an excellent businessman, but he was a humanitarian, philanthropist, he did everything and he gave of himself like no other person, probably. And so it's a great honor for me to be the recipient of the 2009 Leon S. Peters Award because of who it represents. And serving on that board at community hospitals for the length of time that I did I can appreciate what Leon S. Peters did, because he was Mr. Community Hospital. And if he could see that wonderful place today, Community and Medical Center -- Regional Medical Center, he would be so proud, and we owe a lot to him because he was the foundation of that hospital and did a wonderful job. And so we have a great leader to follow. And many other things opened up, and it just -- we just walked through those doors as they opened up, and here we are. And we still want to be involved in the community because we feel like it has still a lot of potential, even though we have a lot of struggles right now. But if we persevere it will -- it will be over with, and we'll be on our way.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Well, you certainly -- was a child of the Depression. And one of the amazing qualities about the American people, this country of immigrants is that they persevered. And as long as people stick together and have a vision and give to each other and certainly you exemplify that. In a very biblical sense when you cast your net upon the water it comes back tenfold. And certainly you have cast your net in your contribution to the community. When you name names like past recipients of Bud Richter, the Richter family, I know Bud has been also very involved with Fresno State, and you have -- Fresno State has been the beneficiary of your philanthropy. How did you get involved with some of the things out at the university?

>>Lou Herwaldt: Again, Bud Richter and I are very good friends. And he opened more doors for me. We became part of the Fresno Bank of Commerce. Bud Richter's been a strong friend, and you know, you need somebody to take you the next step and the next step and the next step. And he had all that recognition way before I had any. And so having a friend like him you can't help but get involved.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Even though you're a very humble person, it must be humbling when you look at the Bud Richters and the Sam Reeves and the Helen Smades and you go through the Octavia Diener and then to be in that category and say to yourself boy, God has really, really blessed me. And knowing your modesty, and it's not a false modesty, I'm sure that this has made a big

impression on your friends, although you deserved it. But I'm sure from your point of view, you're just humbled by it.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well, I've never even thought about receiving this. And that's not trying to be humble, but that is the truth. You know, I met Lew Eaton when I was a service manager at Lincoln Mercury. And that kind of man, when I met him, he treated me like an equal, and I was not an equal. And people like Bill Helm, other people like that, and being in the car business I met a lot of people that were very instrumental, being outstanding citizens in this community. So I had a lot of pictures in my mind what a real man is, that is successful in the business world but commits himself to serving their communities. And so I followed suit. But I don't deserve any of the credit because I had somebody taking me by the hand and leading me along and opening up doors that I could not have opened by myself. And being on that hospital board was the greatest experience of my life. It's a difficult task, and today we are experiencing a wonderful facility and -- so that's very rewarding. Now one of the things that I've learned as I -- after I received this award, I look back and try to see what the foundation in my life was. The media ask me, you know, what shaped your life. How did you get started, what got you on this road? And the truth is working with my dad in a shoe shop in Chicago when I was 10 years old. I saw what his integrity was. He was a man of faith, and he taught me to be a man of faith. And that -- that laid a foundation for me that I think every young person in this world needs is a foundation. You either get it from your parents or from a schoolteacher or from a friend. But without that foundation I would not have been one to persevere and to keep on going and to move ahead. And I'm very grateful for the blessings.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: I am smiling because when you mention about working with your father in the shoe shop as a young man, I was blessed with that same experience. My dad's little malt shop down there. You got to meet the public, and I laugh even today when here at the county office, when people used to ask me when somebody wanted to spend something, you know how many milk shakes it would take to do that. So you learn the value of the dollar, but you also learned the value of work, and you learned it from your father. And what an incredible, incredible experience. You've seen a lot in Fresno since you've come. What are some of the changes, both good and bad, that you've noticed in the community? We'll talk a little bit about it and I know you don't want to crystal-ball a lot of things, but what do you think some of the challenges down the road -- what kind of changes have you seen, people who get involved, people who don't get involved. And you mentioned Rotary too. And we should talk a little bit about Rotary, about what a tremendous service organization that they have done and how many people have benefitted from Rotary, whether it's North Fresno or all the Rotary clubs, and service clubs in general, that they have done as well. But what are some of the changes you've seen, Lou, since you've been here.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well certainly it's grown tremendously. The challenges have grown as well. I think as we move forward from today with a new president and the hope that he brings many people I think is very, very important. There are some people who have been left behind. As far as they're concerned, and now I think they have some hope. Now we got to provide them the way to go. I think you need -- everyone needs a foundation, and if you don't start with a foundation, then somewhere along the line we as citizens in this community are going to have to provide the educational system, the jobs that are required, all the things that every family needs. So we're going to have to come together. And we're going to have to think about relationships and stewardship as we move forward. We cannot come to a place where we say we're going to retire and not keep on

moving to help someone else in this community. And this community provides the strength of a community, it's pretty large now, but it still has the strength. You can walk around Fresno and people know you, and you know them. And I think that community-building, a small community within the larger community, where you have to get back and deal with the problems that we face. And we've got to have some solutions. And we have to persevere and we have to teach what it means to persevere. It's easy to start but you can't quit. You've got to keep on going regardless of what happens.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: What advice would you give to young people, students out at the Craig School of Business who are starting out, want to make their million real quick and be successful in the -- in the business community. What advice would you give them?

>>Lou Herwaldt: I would -- the first piece of advice would be that God grants wisdom that gives you understanding for life. So if you could understand life then you have to understand the business that you're going into very thoroughly. You cannot start at the top; you cannot wish to be at the top. You need to start and have a great understanding of the business that you're going into. And then you have to seek out all the wisdom from people in the community who have come before you, have gone before you, and ask how they did it. You need to have a mentor; you need someone to hang on to you and to hold on to you. When you're ready to quit that you just keep pushing forward. But you have to understand -- you have to have an understanding of what life is first. Then you can understand what business is by becoming acquainted with it and applying yourself to learning it.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: You've seen changes in government as well. And this is certainly not a political question. You've seen changes in mayors, you've seen changes in city council members, you've seen [inaudible] leadership. How important of a role -- sometimes people think that you have to have an official position to be a leader in our community. And yet we look at so many of you who've never had an official title but have had profound leadership influences upon our community. Can you just mention a few things about the changes you've seen in leadership, both nationally and locally, what you think is important, that these characteristics that our leaders possess.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well, one of the thing -- excuse me -- one of the things in this society I think we're waiting for somebody to give us something rather than to go out and do something. And we as leaders, even though we haven't had the official positions, we need to demonstrate, we need to get interested in young people, we need to be involved in the things that they want to be accomplished with their lives. And we have to make the way. We're going to have to give of ourselves and of our money and all the other things that we have, all the experiences that we have, and we're going to have to grab a hold of some of them and help them through. But I think the young people are waiting for someone to give them something and I don't think it works that way. I think you have to put out all the effort that you possibly can, and you've got to knock down some doors, and you have to persevere. And I don't know whether when you start with more than you and I started when we were younger, we started from nothing. And there was nothing else to rely on except to move through it and to get going. Today they're more expectant of someone to help them rather than helping themselves. And I think establishing relationships probably is the key issue. Relationships have to trump the issue. As long as you have the relationship intact, we can accomplish a lot in this community. If we let the issue drive us apart we are not going win. We are not going to succeed. So I think

relationships is the most important thing that has helped me in my entire life and still today.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: I felt with that answer that I was talking to Ken Maddy because that's precisely -- Ken Maddy was of your era as well too, Ken said it's all about relationships, all about relationships. You know, when people talk about Lou Herwaldt and -- and when you've been formally -- this was announced, a lot of people, we've been talking, and they said you know, Lou has not just been a successful businessman and a successful philanthropist, but also your family and your faith means a great deal to you as well. And we talk about people will know you by your reputation. And talk about your family and your wife, you've been married how long now?

>>Lou Herwaldt: We've been married 57 years. And so -- having a wife -- I'm grateful for the wife I have because she's a person who always wants to keep on going. She doesn't see anything negative, she sees every day positive. I never have to wake up in the morning and get her started. She gets me started. So I've had a wonderful helpmate in life for 57 years. I have two children, I have five grandchildren, we have two great-grandchildren, we're about to have three more. And all of our family lives right here in Fresno. So we -- the two are now 18 and our family is very, very close and the relationships that we have with each other are very, very important. But getting beyond that, my faith in God has helped me not to become a weirdo but to be someone that had a foundation underneath them. And so my faith in God is absolutely important, it's important to all of our family. And as I look at our family today, at -- I'm blessed. But I'm -- I'm glad that my faith took me beyond that. I know -- remember when my father finally retired at 65. He wasn't a well man, he had asthma pretty bad. But when he retired he went to the rescue mission weekly to help people there. And I saw him as he operated in that little shoe repair shop. How he would talk to people, and how he was interested in what they were doing. And he repaired those shoes the best he could. So I've had so many examples, but family and faith in God and -- and relationships in this community. I can't say enough about that because without those relationships I could name you many, many men that I have great respect for. You know, Jim Hallowell is a great man, Lew Eaton -- I mean, just -- there's a whole host of people. You are -- many people in the relationships that I've had I cherish. And I think if people have those kinds of relationships they can't fail. Somebody will pick them up.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Lou, the great Notre Dame, the great football coach Knute Rockne once said when the great scorekeeper finally tallies the score it matters not whether you won or lost but how the game was played. Knowing how truly modest you are, how do you want people to speak of and remember Lou Herwaldt years from now. What would be the most important thing to you, to want them to -- when they speak of you, what would you want them to think of?

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well, first of all my reputation is what it is. And it's come about through many years in this community. So what that reputation is, it is. But I would like them to say that I was a fair and honest man, I was a good employer, I cared about my employees, I cared about my people, I cared about my family, I cared about the community, I did all that I could, maybe I still could do some more. But I did my best. You know, those that come behind us, will they have found us faithful. Did we keep on moving, did we keep on giving and -- of ourselves and of who we are. And will we lift up somebody who's down on the bottom and help them to get started again. So -- our reputation is what it is. We -- you have to build it over a period of time. I tried to guard my reputation for years to treating people honestly and with courtesy and care. And so it is

what it is, I don't even see what it is. Other people speak about it, but it is what it is.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Well, I think that they say and they believe that now, and there's a saying by the poet Popham that there is a destiny that makes us brothers, none goes away alone, all that we send in the lives of others come back into our own. And you certainly personify that saying. And I would be remiss if I didn't thank you on behalf of the Fresno Athletic Hall of Fame, you and Bob Duncan with your contribution to the Metropolitan Museum. And one of these days we're going to make that dream come true, of our permanent location but on behalf of not only Fresno Athletic Hall of Fame, but also the Fresno Chamber of Commerce who awarded you this outstanding honor. We want to congratulate you for a lifetime of dedication to this community and to give appreciation for all those who have benefitted from your -- your philanthropy and your leadership. Being the teacher that I am, when given a test, is there anything that I should have asked that I didn't ask that you would like to comment on, in general. Please feel free to do so.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Well, I think you've done a good job in covering most of it, and it's been an outstanding privilege for me to be the recipient of that award this year because of who it represents in Leon S. Peters. And I just hope that I can move on in life. I'm 76, I've had quite a few problems physically with open heart surgery and cancer and those kinds of things. But I -- I still have much to do. I'm going to be having five great-grandchildren, and I'd like to see those grow up and become good citizens of this community as well as our grandchildren are today. So I really don't have anything further to add to what you've asked. And I count it a privilege to be part of this community.

>>Dr. Peter G. Mehas: Well again, Lou, congratulations on a lifetime of achievement, and you certainly, just as other people, Leon S. Peters and Bud Richter and Lew Eaton have been models for all of us. You certainly now are a model and will continue to be for many other young people coming up. So again, on behalf of the community and the Chamber, it's been a real, real privilege spending some time with you now, and may God bless you and your family and grandchildren in years to come.

>>Lou Herwaldt: Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

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