

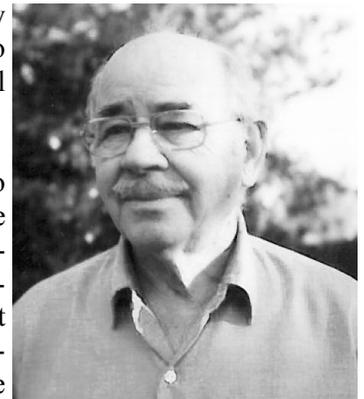
THE BIG FOUR

By David Calia¹

You might be thinking of the big four as Huntington, Hopkins, Stanford and Crocker, who were the chief entrepreneurs of the Central Pacific Railroad, which was a major force in developing our region and the State of California along with the West. Structural Engineering in the Sacramento region after World War II was also shaped by the Big Four, but I am not thinking of Central Pacific's big four. I'm thinking of four men from four local engineering firms, that in some form or another, have been structural engineering institutions in Sacramento for a very, very long time and are still here today. You know these firms today as Lionakis, Miyamoto International, Buehler & Buehler Structural Engineers and Barrish-Pelham. For the record, two of these men founded two of the aforementioned firms. It should also not go unmentioned that there were other great engineers in Sacramento before the Big Four. Mr. George Goodall and Mr. Ernie Francis are two such engineers. Mr. Francis worked in town prior to and through the War. But the Big Four I'm thinking of are Beaumont, Sauer, Buehler, and Barrish. It is important that we remember the Big Four for their contributions to the profession, the Structural Engineers Association and to our communities.

Mr. Arthur A. Sauer was born in Minnesota in 1900. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1923 and came to Los Angeles to begin his career. He later moved to Sacramento and was employed by the "State Division of Architecture" in the Structural section.

During WWII, Art was a commander in the Navy See/Bees. His first orders were to find a suitable site in the Pacific North-West, where Air Bases, made of ice, could be constructed. They were intended to be floated into the Pacific and used in the war effort. Everything needed to support bomber aircraft and a refrigeration system to maintain the ice would be provided. He did find the site, but the project was canceled. Art was then sent to the Pacific Theater of Operations. At the end of the War, Art was stationed in Japan overseeing reconstruction projects. When he was discharged, Art came back to Sacramento to work. He was reinstated by the State of California, but he decided to start his own firm. In 1946 he began, "Arthur A. Sauer – Structural Engineer". His first office was at 620 ½ Eye Street, Sacramento.



Art Sauer, S79

The firm prospered with the post-war growth of school construction in the Central Valley. It soon became clear to Art, that to better serve his clients throughout Central California, he should open offices in Stockton and Fresno. Art then made three of his engineers, Ken Marr, Charles Grimes and Joe Wood, associates. Later the associates became partners and the offices became Sauer & Marr in Sacramento, Sauer & Grimes in Stockton and Sauer & Wood in Fresno. Mr. Sauer worked primarily in Sacramento, but would visit each of the two regional offices on a regular basis. He was personally involved in the projects of all three of the offices, which gave them the "Sauer Touch."

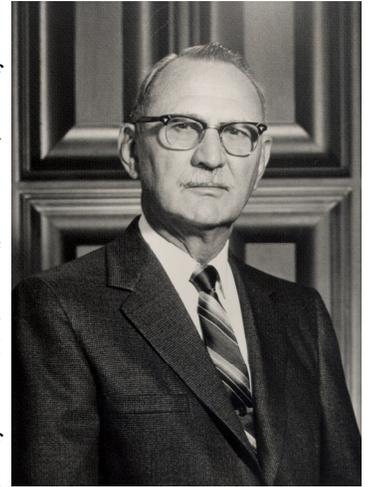
It was in the Stockton office that long-time employee, John Taylor (JT) first started working for Mr. Sauer. JT remembers, "Art ran a tight ship. He was a fine engineer, a good guy, as honest as the day is long. Art cared about the personal and professional growth of his staff. As busy as he was, he always had the time to mentor me. What he taught me gave me the tools I needed to have a 45 year career in our profession. I am certainly not the only person that can make that statement. Art was my employer, my mentor and my friend."

The offices became independent when Art retired in the '70's. The Sacramento office eventually evolved into Miyamoto International, where Art's idea of creating regional offices to better serve the firm's clients continues today.

(Continued on page 7)

THE BIG FOUR *(Continued from page 6)*

Mr. Walter A. Buehler received his degree in architectural engineering from the University of Illinois. During the early part of his career he worked in Los Angeles. Mr. Gene Cole, a former employee recalls that Walt worked on the original design of the Hollywood Bowl. Work became scarce during the Great Depression and he was out of work for a few years. Mr. Buehler moved north to San Francisco to work for the Structural Section of the State Division of Architecture in 1937. At that time, he designed some of the early California State Fair buildings. During the war, Mr. Buehler worked for the Army Corps where he designed artillery placements along the Coast to protect the San Francisco Bay from invasion. Gene recalls that Walt also designed concrete ships to be used in the war effort. In '46 Mr. Buehler started his own structural engineering firm, which became Buehler & Buehler in 1952 after being joined by his son, Mr. Walter D. Buehler. During the post-war construction boom, Mr. Buehler worked on lots of various projects, from schools to warehouses. He was the structural engineer for the Campbell's Soup Company plant located in the south of town. He and Mr. Jimmie Yee, a former employee of Buehler & Buehler, designed the Sacramento Convention Center. Walt designed the balcony of the Theater portion of the project as it was a very tough design. Gene fondly recollects Walt as being, "a really smart guy and a real classic gentleman." He had a real "hands-on" perspective to his work, from keeping his own books, even while his company grew larger, to digging holes on project sites in order to classify site soils himself. He had a grand range of knowledge. Jimmie remembers, "Walt was the nicest guy. You didn't have to worry about a contract. His word was his bond."



Walter Buehler Sr., S89

Mr. Buehler was very focused on engineering and his company, but also found time to help write the structural portion of the California State architectural licensing exam. One year nobody passed. Walt was questioned about this, to which he replied, "their license allows them to legally design buildings. They ought to know a little about structures," according to Gene Cole. Walt was also a local president for SEAOC.

Mr. Jack Barrish grew up in San Francisco. He went to college at UC Berkeley with Mr. Henry Degenkolb in the 1930's. During the War, Jack was a Major in the Army Corps of Engineers and was involved with some very well known military operations, like the Manhattan Project, and was deployed to the Philippines under General Douglas MacArthur.



Jack Barrish, S623

After his time in the Army Corps, Jack went to work for the George E. Goodall Company in 1946. Back in those early days, the George E. Goodall Company designed a lot of civil projects, like dams and transmission towers, and did their share in the design of schools during the construction boom after the war. Mr. Stan Aldrich joined the firm shortly after in the 1950's. Mr. Klyne Beaumont even worked for George E. Goodall with Mr. Barrish sometime in this era before moving on to work for Mr. George Lionakis in 1957.

The name of the firm has changed several times. It first changed in the 1960's to J. S Barrish upon Mr. Goodall's passing. In the 1970's, the name changed to Barrish, Aldridge and Schroeder. And, in the '80's, the evolution continued when Mr. Aldridge wanted to retire. Stan knew of Steve through SEAOC as Steve was the local member Association President at the time. So in 1987, Steve merged Pelham Schleuter and Hamamoto with Jack's firm. Since then the firm has been Barrish Pelham & Associates.

(Continued on page 8)

THE BIG FOUR *(Continued from page 7)*

During his long career, Jack was part of some very notable projects, such as the original Crocker Museum retrofit and the Hastings House remodel on the east side of the museum, several projects for the Sacramento City College campus, and the 2000 foot tall transmission towers that you can see West of I-5 just north of Lodi. In honor of his work, Mr. Barrish received a California State Senate Resolution from State Legislator Leroy F. Greene, who was a licensed civil engineer. Mr. Greene’s legislative career supported hundreds of bills regarding schools and education. He valued Mr. Barrish’s opinion on the role of structural engineering of schools and the role of the Division of the State Architect.

Jack was also heavily involved with the profession outside of his design practice. He served as SEAOC State President in 1970 and started the local member Association Code Committee. In 1955 he bought a T-bird with the bubble window on the side, which he kept for over 30 years. He changed the license plate to “SEAOC” when California first created the vanity plate option. Jack was also a founder of the Applied Technology Council, ATC. Mr. Barrish was inducted to the SEAOC College of Fellows in the first inaugural class.

Aside from work and support of the profession, Mr. Barrish was a local Rotarian, supported the Cancer Society and Rotarian charitable efforts. He especially loved cooking and was an accomplished chef with several of his recipes being published in Sunset Magazine. Mr. Pelham recalls that, “Jack was not shy, but not boastful. He was unassuming. He was a walking encyclopedia. He knew a lot about everything. Jack loved to tell long quirky stories that didn’t seem to have a point until you thought about them for a while and then realized that he answered your question.”

Mr. Klyne Beaumont was often heard to say, “If you give back to the profession, it will take care of you.” I first heard this phrase from Mr. Art Ross, a former employee of Mr. Klyne Beaumont, when Mr. Ross joined CYS several years ago. I have since heard this phrase from others. You can still feel its meaning throughout SEAOC as our active members are committed to the profession and to the good of the Association.

According to the October 2007 edition of the Lionakis Beaumont Design Group newsletter, “the shape of things,” “his dedication and loyalty to advancing the structural engineering discipline had also spanned throughout his 40-year career. As a full partner at Liske-Lionakis-Beaumont & Engberg, he led many successful projects, such as the Sacramento County Administration Building, the Sacramento Bee Newspaper plant, and Consumnes River College. He was the exclusive engineer for many of the firm’s clients, such as Pacific Telephone & Telegraph and the Rio Linda Union School District.” Per Mr. Tim Fry, “Beau had an innate ability and confidence to make quick decisions. One of his favorite quotes was, Focus on the eagles and let the gnats fall where they lay.”



Klyne Beaumont, S837

For Mr. Beaumont’s contributions to the structural engineering profession and long time membership in and support of SEAOC, he was posthumously awarded the honor of SEAOC Fellow in the Spring of 2007 by the College of Fellows. Only 12 hold this top honor.

Structural Engineering in the Sacramento region and SEAOC owe a lot to Mr. Beaumont, Mr. Sauer, Mr. Buehler, and Mr. Barrish. Actually, these influential men were not the first structural engineering consultants in Sacramento. Mr. Jimmie Yee points out that there were others, with Mr. Ernie Francis being the first; his Civil Engineering License was 277. Another remnant of this bygone era remains; there was a ladies group called the Structurettes, which was comprised of the wives of SEAOC Engineers. Today there are about 12 remaining Structurettes. Our Sacramento engineering heritage harkens back to the Big Four as these four men, according to Mr. Yee, “controlled the

(Continued on page 9)



THE BIG FOUR *(Continued from page 8)*

structural engineering market in town after the War.” One thing is for sure; everyone that I have talked to in writing this article still holds these gentlemen in high regard. They were true gentlemen that knew how to work hard and take care of business. And in those days, don’t forget, all of the calculations were performed with a slide rule and the drawings were drafted by hand. A lot of good engineers worked under these Four. And a lot of those engineers are still here in town. You know who you are . . . We are the legacy of all of the great engineers that have come before us. This is not something to be taken lightly as it is our turn to be the custodians of our profession for those that come after us.

¹ This article would not be possible if it were not for the help of the following individuals:

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