

WHITFORD JULIAN VANDUSEN

Inducted 2005

Whitford Julian VanDusen was born in Tara, Ontario, just west of Owen Sound, on January 18th, 1889, the youngest of three sons of Whitford VanDusen and Sarah Holcomb. He was a great-grandson of Loyalist Conrad VanDusen, one of the founders of Old Hay Bay Church in Adolphustown in 1792. He spent his early years in Toronto, enrolling at the University of Toronto in electrical engineering.

In 1909, when VanDusen was 20 years old, he met Harold R. MacMillan, who was then Assistant Director of Forestry for the federal government. That meeting began a friendship which lasted over half a century and laid the foundation of a business association which made them both millionaires. Following that meeting, he switched to forestry, graduating in 1912 with a B.Sc. in Forestry. That same year he married Alma Blanche Heal, a student at the Toronto Conservatory of Music, and they had one daughter. Phae.



His first job was with an Alberta division of the Dominion Forest Service, at \$30 a month. However H.R. MacMillan quickly enlisted him as his Assistant Chief of Management of the B.C. Forest Service, of which MacMillan had since become the Chief Forester. With the onset of WWI, VanDusen was loaned by the B.C. government to the Imperial Munitions Board, to supervise the production of Spruce in the Queen Charlotte Islands for the construction of aircraft. When "H.R." set up H.R. MacMillan Export Company in 1919 (a forerunner of MacMillan Bloedel), VanDusen joined him and they worked from a 2-room office in downtown Vancouver. The pair made a formidable business team. The company survived challenges from several competitive groups, redoubling its sales efforts, and the company flourished. VanDusen ran it during much of World War II when MacMillan served as a "dollar-a-year man" in Ottawa.

This was the period when he began his great philanthropic work for which he is most remembered. In 1943, he and nine other men each put up \$10,000 to establish The Vancouver Foundation, a non-profit perpetual trust organization which provides financial support to welfare, charitable and community projects. For many years he was chairman of the Foundation, which is now one of the top ten community foundations in North America, with assets of over 50 million dollars. Recipients of grants have included the Children's Hospital, Canadian Arthritis & Rheumatism Society, YMCA, Girl Guides, the United Church of Canada, the Salvation Army, Vancouver Symphony Society, Canadian Forestry Association, to name a few, and has provided many college bursaries for students.

Mr. VanDusen was a member of Canadian Memorial United Church, and served many years as Governor and Chairman of the Board of The Vancouver School of Theology. Yet in most of his philanthropy, he chose to remain anonymous, shunning any spotlight or acclaim. When the Shaughnessy Golf Course was threatened with development, VanDusen purchased it anonymously for \$1 million. Taken over by the City of Vancouver, it was converted into a magnificent public garden, called VanDusen Botanical Gardens—the only place where his name is publicly displayed.

At the age of 84, he retired from the Board of Governors of MacMillan Bloedel. Whitford Julian VanDusen died on December 15, 1978 at the age of 89.