

Greg Alvin Howell: Authenticity and Approachability Redefined

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I started my 11 year friendship with Greg Howell on a \$7 Billion California Prison Healthcare Receivership program in Sacramento in 2008. Dick Bayer and I were lead facilitators and Greg was the leader of the lean coaching/training team. My first memory of Greg was with 20 people in a small conference room with Greg informally explaining various lean concepts and approaches. Will Lichtig was backing him up. At one point Greg sat down, looked down, and announced, "I'm declaring a breakdown. I'm not sure where to go from here." I had never seen someone call himself out like that - usually teachers just bluff their way through. Besides his incomparable knowledge of Lean Construction, Greg's complete honesty and humility were the first things I saw in him.

Will made a couple of suggestions and Greg got right back on track. It was pure Greg. That's how my lean journey started. A few weeks later Greg took a bunch of us to the NorCal CoP meeting. I had thought Greg was just another really smart guy until we walked into the room full of other professionals and applause broke out and people started shouting, "It's Greg Howell!" I found out he was a bit of a celebrity.

Another time, same program, he came into Dick's and my shared office, plopped down on a chair, ran his fingers through his tousled hair, sighed and said, "I've got this little non-profit I'm not paying enough attention to, and I need to do something." He was talking about the Lean Construction Institute. Dick and I were invited to pitch in, became board members and Dick went on to be Interim Executive Director. The rest is history, as they say. But Greg and Glenn were not only the founders of LCI and Last Planner® and so much more, but literally the brains, heart and soul of the organization and the methodology.

LCI has always been soulful, and a bit Quixotic. Greg has an incomparable talent for making each of us feel like we have a special relationship to him; that we are as special to him as he is to us. (Note the present tense.) Another memory illustrates that. My partner and I were living in Sacramento for the same program, it's now 2009, and Greg's daughter, Emily, is working for us on the program. Greg and Emily came over to our house on a rainy night to drop off her dog for a couple of days of dog sitting. Emily and my partner went into the main house with the dog, but Greg plopped down on the floor of the foyer, pulled off his wet shoes, leaned back against the wall and just sat there for an hour, shoeless. I joined him on the floor and we talked about everything and nothing. He was completely

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comfortable in every situation and venue. And he made the rest of us feel comfortable with him. I don't miss that...because I will always have that.

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Gregory Alvin Howell (Greg Howell) passed away peacefully on June 15, 2020 at home in Ketchum, Idaho. He was born February 3, 1943 in Springfield, Missouri to Alvin Hinshaw Howell and Joyce Howell, née Gregory. He lived in Independence, Missouri before moving to Scottsdale, Arizona when he was in high school. Greg studied construction engineering at Stanford, was a member of the ATO fraternity, and played on the university rugby team. After he graduated in 1965, Greg joined the Navy as a Lieutenant Commander in the Civil Engineering Corps and commanded Mobile Construction Battalion 11, better known as the Seabees. He served in Vietnam in Dong Ha and then led a group of 12 Navy men in a kind of Peace Corp role in northern Thailand for one year. After returning to the U.S. he served as Aide to Admiral Robert Wooding. Among his duties was recruiting on university campuses in full dress uniform amidst the rising protests against the war in Viet Nam.

In 1972, after leaving the Navy, Greg worked with Paolo Soleri at Arcosanti for a while, then returned to Stanford for a Master's in Construction Engineering. Two of his instructors, Henry Parker and Clark Oglesby, had just authored a book on construction productivity improvement. Their teaching inspired Greg to explore more fully how to improve construction work methods, and in 1989, Greg joined his mentors as author of Construction Productivity Improvement. After graduating in 1973, he started working at Timelapse, Inc. in Mountain View, CA. Greg eventually took over the company and hired his future wife, Dana Langhorne, as office manager.

In 1986, Greg moved from California to Albuquerque, where he held the position of Visiting Professor, funded by the New Mexico AGC, in the construction program at the University of New Mexico. In 1997 he left the University and moved to Ketchum, Idaho. He founded the Lean Construction Institute with Glenn Ballard to work with construction industry companies to develop and deploy Lean thinking and practice. In 2001, he founded Lean Project Consulting with Hal Macomber.