

Greg Alvin Howell: Unforgettable Summer

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I remember my first day in the fall of 2008 on the job with Lean Project Consulting, a firm owned at the time by Greg Howell and Hal Macomber. I flew into Sacramento and showed up on a \$7 billion program with one of the industry's most progressive delivery models that has ever been performed; three self-selected design and construction teams collocated, competing and collaborating to deliver the most innovative prototype of healthcare facilities to be built by a team of innovative lean thinkers! Greg Howell, along with many other founding members of the Lean Construction movement were deeply involved in this program. I had not met Greg before that day, but he welcomed me warmly. He asked for my thoughts and respected what I had to say about the project, as if I had even a fraction of the wisdom and experience that he had! A few days later I was going to help him with a full day training class, and I remember his valuable words of inspiration right before we started, "Don't f*** it up," he said with a smile, a chuckle and a twinkle in his eye.

For the next 4 years I was fortunate to be able to work with Greg, learning about Lean, Integrated Project Delivery, Last Planner System[®], and the lens that enables Lean's effectiveness. Beyond that, Greg also taught me how to use my brain and my mind beyond just "thinking." He taught me how to access some of the secrets the brain holds inside, and that when we "forget" things, they are not really forgotten. They are just lost in the vastness of our minds, waiting to be found.

More importantly, Greg was one of the most genuine, compassionate, and kind-hearted people I have known. Investing in people came naturally to Greg because he truly cared about them. One of my favorite times with Greg was staying at the Howell house for a few days one summer. The short week is packed with great memories. Greg and Dana took me on a float trip down a quiet river, stopping for a picnic dinner along a remote bank without a site or sound of the civilized world. Each evening we went on beautiful sunset hikes in Adams Gulch. And one afternoon Greg loaded us up in his old Volkswagen microbus, though he didn't bother telling me I was getting in for the scariest ride of my life! As he drove along the narrow, dirt road that hugged the edges of the mountains of Sun Valley, he pointed out all kinds of things about the geology, the landscape and the wildlife. Every evening was full of stories and great thought-provoking conversation. Throughout the time I've known Greg, he always had an ear to listen and some of the best wisdom to share. Here's to hoping all of us who knew Greg intentionally carry his spirit and his nature in our lives and our interactions with others.

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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.

