Hallie Brown Ford (1905-2007)

Hallie Brown Ford was a philanthropist who gave millions to support the arts at institutions in Oregon and Oklahoma and established scholarships through a foundation, now known as the Ford Family Foundation, that she and her husband created in 1957. Her gift of $15 million to the Pacific Northwest College of Art in 2007, a few months before her death at the age of 102, was the largest donation to a cultural group in Oregon's history.

Hallie Brown, the oldest of five children of Ethel and James Brown, was born March 17, 1905, in Red Fork, near Tulsa, in Indian Territory (which in 1907 became part of the new state of Oklahoma). She was valedictorian of her high school class in Beggs, Oklahoma, and supported herself at East Central University in Ada, where she earned a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate. She taught in Oklahoma before moving with her parents to Lebanon, Oregon.

She married Kenneth W. Ford in 1935 and moved with him to Roseburg, Oregon, where they established the Roseburg Lumber Company (now Roseburg Forest Products Company). This began during the Depression as a single mill with second-hand equipment but grew to generate a fortune for the Fords.

Hallie Ford showed aptitude for art as a child and remained interested in it all her life, believing it to be a humanizing force that should be available to all. She was a central figure in the arts community in Roseburg, and—with the painter Harry Widman—organized the Southern Oregon Arts Festival to coincide with the Oregon Centennial in 1959. After divorcing in the early 1970s, she moved to Salem, where she took art classes with the painter Carl Hall, a professor at Willamette University. This led to a long association with Willamette that resulted in donations over three decades totaling $14 million. She was a lead donor for the University's Hallie Ford Museum of Art, a six-gallery, 27,000-square-foot facility that opened in 1998.

Ford, individually and through the family foundation, also continued to support the arts in Roseburg and at East Central University, her alma mater in Oklahoma. She was particularly proud of the Ford Opportunity Scholarship Program (created in 1995), providing financial aid for single-parent college students in Oregon. Announced after her death was her $8 million donation to Oregon State University in support of the Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families.

Ford, a modest person who lived frugally and shunned public attention, was the recipient of the Oregon Governor's Arts Award (1996), an honorary degree from Willamette (1996), and the Distinguished Philanthropist Award from East Central University (2007).

Written by Roger Hull

Further Reading:

"Hallie E. Ford" [obituary]. *Statesman Journal,* Salem: 7 June 2007, 7C.

Gustafson, Alan. "Philanthropist always had yearning for the arts." *Statesman Journal,* Salem: 18 Dec. 1996, 1A-2A.

Much, Justin. "Arts philanthropist Hallie Ford dies." *Statesman Journal.* Salem, 7 June 2007, 1A, 6A.

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