Terry Schrunk (1913-1975)

Terrence Doyle "Terry" Schrunk served as mayor of Portland for sixteen years, from 1957 to 1972. It was a time of business growth and redevelopment for the city, and Schrunk's tenure as mayor was one of the longest in Portland's history.

Shrunk was born on March 10, 1913, on a farm near Stayton. His family moved to Portland's St. Johns neighborhood in 1921, and he graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1932. He attended the University of Portland from 1933 until joining the Portland Fire Bureau in 1935. Continuing his college work during the summer and through correspondence courses, Schrunk received a degree in economics and political science from the University of Oregon in 1942. He married Virginia Dorothy Price in 1936; the couple had three children.

In 1942, Schrunk joined the U.S. Navy, where he served on the aircraft carrier USS *Ticonderoga* and gained the rank of lieutenant. He received the Purple Heart and Silver Star for heroism in 1945, when he was wounded by shrapnel from a Japanese bomb.

Returning to Portland after the war, Schrunk rejoined the Fire Bureau and was soon promoted to captain. In 1949, following the recall of Sheriff Mike Elliott for making misrepresentations during his campaign, Multnomah County commissioners appointed Schrunk sheriff. He subsequently won election for sheriff and in 1956 ran for mayor. He defeated Mayor Fred Peterson in a heated campaign that included charges of both candidates' links to organized gambling.

The controversy—tied to newspaper and official investigations into racketeering in the city—followed Schrunk into the mayor's office. He was charged with perjury when he denied in grand jury testimony that he had accepted a bribe from gambling figures while he was sheriff. He was acquitted in 1973.

As mayor, Schrunk actively backed Portland's business and infrastructure development. He supported a merger of the Port of Portland and the city's Commission on Public Docks; increased relations with Asia, including establishing a sister-city program with Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan; and oversaw urban renewal and the creation of public transit (today's TriMet) to replace the private bus system. During Schrunk's tenure, Memorial Coliseum was constructed, a number of high-rise office buildings were built, and low- and middle-income housing received attention. He was unsuccessful, however, in his advocacy of a city income tax and the consolidation of city and county governments.

Schrunk was president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 1968-1969 and a member of the executive board of the American Executive Committee of Japan-American Conference of Mayors and Chambers of Commerce Presidents. He won easy re-election as mayor three times before announcing his retirement in 1972, citing growing health concerns that included back problems resulting from his wartime injury. He was succeeded as mayor by Commissioner Neil Goldschmidt.

Schrunk died on March 4, 1975, following a heart attack. Terry D. Schrunk Plaza, adjacent to City Hall, was dedicated to his memory in 1977.

Written by Philip Cogswell

Further Reading:

Lansing, Jewel. *Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851-2001*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003.

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