

PROFILE OF
MELVIN N. ZAJAC

Chairman, The Mel Jr. & Marty Zajac Foundation



Mel Zajac was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has been a resident of Vancouver, British Columbia since 1949. In 1958 he constructed one of the city's first hi-rise apartments in the West End of Vancouver. He continued constructing approximately 22 additional buildings which eventually led to the construction of the Pacific Palisades Apartments, the Office Complex, and the Pacific Palisades Hotel from 1966 to 1969. The Pacific Palisades Hotel was "home" to the movie industry and became known as "Hollywood of the North", coined by the late famous columnist, Jack Wasserman, because it hosted such celebrities as Bob Hope (who was a close personal friend of Mel's), Katherine Hepburn, Vincent Price, Don Ameche, Leslie Nielsen, Kirk Douglas and Tom Selleck, to mention just a few. Mel continued as President of the Pacific Palisades Hotel until 1989.

Humanitarian and altruistic generosity towards others is a large part of Mel's life, and is what Mel himself sees as his greatest role. His many philanthropic endeavours and selfless and charitable acts owe their inception and continuity - their very endurance - to the man and his family who created them.

Mel's resolve to give back to the community he loves has long been evidenced through his annual charity golf tournament - conceived in 1964 and now the longest running such charitable event in British Columbia. Until 1987 the major recipient of the fund raising event was the Variety Club.

Following the untimely deaths of Mel's two sons, in separate sporting accidents, Mel formed The Mel Jr. & Marty Zajac Foundation in 1987. The Foundation has contributed greatly to the community.

In 1992 The Zajac Foundation, under the direction of Mel Zajac, formed a partnership with the Vancouver Neurological Foundation to develop and open a facility in East Vancouver for children and adults with neurological disorders. The BC Centre for Ability was a \$4 million project. In honour of Mel's involvement and generosity, in 1999 he was awarded an honorary lifetime membership.

In 1997 The Zajac Foundation partnered with another not-for-profit and developed Zajac Norgate House a 36 unit building specifically designed for seniors and those with disabilities. The project was completed in 1999 and is described as providing "an independent lifestyle for today's seniors", the Zajac Norgate House is a fully wheelchair-accessible, four storied apartment complex easy access to elevators, underground parking, security, and open living spaces, all in close proximity to shopping and transit services. Zajac Norgate House in North Vancouver is an outstanding example of ideals and hopes becoming reality.

Mel's present project The Zajac Ranch for Children is his most ambitious project yet. Mel's drive, determination and devotion to his dream of creating a camp for children who otherwise would never have the opportunity to go to camp has become a reality.

The Zajac Ranch for Children has undergone quite a bit of change since first opening in 2004. Since opening its doors, the Ranch has welcomed over 1000 children and numerous volunteer doctors and nurses, some from as far away as Toronto. These children are able to receive kidney dialysis and other medical treatments in our fully furnished, state-of-the-art Medical Centre.

Mel's philanthropic and humanitarian work has continued for decades. Daughters Corinne, Carmen, President of the Zajac Foundation and Karen are his biggest supporters and dedicated to ensuring the perpetuity of the Foundation.

In his leisure time he is found playing golf and is a member of the Capilano Golf & Country Club.