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REPUBLIC COLUMNIST

Arizonaans owe much to those who came first

We in the media are transfixed with anything new. What is trendy and quirky is always the story. In Arizona, that tendency is even more pronounced. We grow so fast, we often dismiss people and policies that preceded our arrival.



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For example, Tuesday, a 270-acre parcel of state-owned land in north Phoenix went up for auction. Its sale was considered a harbinger of better economic times here, at least for the residential construction industry.

It was going to be a big story. And yet ...

On Monday, at a restaurant on top of a downtown Phoenix bank, a luncheon celebrated a modest guy whose family has been here since the 1920s. And most of the people attending had similarly deep roots in Arizona. In fact, it looked like a Cortez High School reunion, Class of 1963, honoring their classmate and friend, Bob Ramsey, who had just donated \$1 million to the Arizona State University School of Public Affairs, specifically its fledgling executive education program.

But it was more.

It looked like an assembly of the state's forward-looking, influential crew that gets so much done around here. For some time, Arizona has been craving an identifiable cadre of leadership, to replace the aging/former giants: Walter Bimson, Gene Pulliam, Frank Snell and Mark Wilmer of the postwar era, and later, the larger-than-life figures of Burt Barr, the "Gung-ho" Legislature, Len Huck, Jim Simmonds, Bill Shover, Jerry Colangelo and Jack Pfister.

They were go-to guys. Things didn't get done around here without them.

Today, there are no indispensable characters. Power is so diffused it's practically invisible. It's a constellation of factions, interest groups, local governments, business interests, public affairs agencies, non-profits and energetic personalities. Sometimes, it coalesces into a determined force capable of im-



Bob Ramsey

portant achievement.

Other times, it splinters and nothing happens.

It's a constellation of players, an *adhocracy*. It's Republican.

It's Democrat. It's nonpartisan. In and out of government. Mostly early boomers or their

mentors of the misnamed Silent Generation.

It's relationships, built on friendships, loyalty, common interests and a vision of a better Arizona.

The governor was there. Sitting at the same table as the mayors of Phoenix and Tempe.

The others:

Ramsey, reared on the west side, in the same Boy Scout Troop 120 with Art Hamilton.

Phoenix Fire Chief Bob Khan (Cortez '77), and Marty Shultz, Pfister, Joe Anderson of Schaller-Anderson. Grant Woods, Pat McGroder, Cathy Eden, Jeff Begay, Phoenix Council members Greg Stanton (Cortez '88) and Claude Mattox, Pat Cantelme, Billy Shields, Lanny Lahr and Bob Robson.

On the other side of the room: Alfredo Gutierrez, Ronnie Lopez, Ben Arredondo, Earl Wilcox and Jessica Flores.

Most of these people come from longtime Arizona families, third and fourth generations. They didn't just land here. They were born here.

Arizona, a state built on change, that worships growth, newness: Communities, power malls, and burgeoning populations. The media, many of us as rootless as tumbleweeds, too often ignore — or remain blissfully unaware of — the enduring contributions of Arizona natives and their continuing influence today. They were on display this week. In a memorable celebration of a significant gift to ASU.

And hardly anyone noticed.

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