



HEALTH CARE PIONEER HENRY J. KAISER INDUCTED INTO THE CALIFORNIA HALL OF FAME

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As health care reform takes the national stage and Kaiser Permanente is being hailed as a care delivery model, renowned entrepreneur [Henry J. Kaiser](#) will be inducted today into [The California Hall of Fame](#). Kaiser's eldest granddaughter, Carlyn Kaiser Stark, will accept the Spirit of California medal on his behalf during a formal, private state ceremony in Sacramento this evening.



Henry J Kaiser with
shipyard worker
in hospital c. 1943

Kaiser's greatest legacy is Kaiser Permanente, one of the world's first prepaid health plans, which he co-founded with [Sidney R. Garfield](#), MD, in 1938. Today, Kaiser Permanente is the nation's largest not-for-profit health plan. In addition, Kaiser was noted for his innovations in shipbuilding and engineering.

"Henry J. Kaiser was a true California innovator, so it is very fitting that he is receiving this honor," said [Tom Debley](#), historian and director of [heritage resources](#) for Kaiser Permanente. "Kaiser wasn't afraid to take risks and plunge headlong into uncharted territory to improve the strength and vitality of American industry, as well as individual health. That's really what the Golden State is all about: driving for a better quality of life."

Kaiser was an entrepreneur who quite literally arrived in California by jumping off a moving train in 1921 to meet the deadline to place what became the winning bid for a section of historic Highway 99 near Redding. He became known for turning lost opportunities into new prospects. After losing a bid to construct the [Shasta Dam](#), for example, he founded Permanente Cement and won the \$6.9 million contract to supply the 5.8 million barrels of cement needed for the job. In 1931, Kaiser helped organize the Six Companies, Inc., consortium, which had a part in building some of the largest infrastructure projects of the 20th century, including the Hoover Dam, Grand Coulee Dam and the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge.

Kaiser's health plan was created during World War II when the shipbuilding tycoon sought a way to provide health care for the thousands of workers in his shipyards. Together with Dr. Garfield, Kaiser extended the plan to the general public after the war's end in 1945. Kaiser went on to establish the [Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation](#), a non-profit organization designed to address the world's major health care issues.

During World War II, with no prior shipbuilding experience, Kaiser became one of the most prolific shipbuilders in history, setting records for speed and efficiency unmatched to this day. He established seven shipyards on the West Coast that produced more ships than any other in the United States and proved instrumental to the Allied victory of the war.

Kaiser entered World War II as a construction and engineering entrepreneur and came out of it with the acumen needed to help redevelop the post-war world. He built homes, cars and aircraft; manufactured steel and aluminum; pioneered tourism in Hawaii; and engineered projects around the globe. At its peak, Kaiser Industries had either enterprises or projects on every continent, including Antarctica. But of all of his endeavors, Kaiser hoped that his contribution to health care would be his legacy. Before passing away in 1967, he said, "Of all the things I've done, I expect only to be remembered for my hospitals. They're the things that are filling the people's greatest need — good health."



***Partners in
Health Care
Innovation***

At the time of his death, Kaiser Permanente had about 1.7 million members, with 1,630 physicians in 18 hospitals. Today, Kaiser Permanente is the country's largest not-for-profit health plan, serving more than 8.6 million members.

The other 2009 California Hall of Fame inductees are Carol Burnett, Andrew Grove, Hiram Johnson, Rafer Johnson, Joan Kroc, George Lucas, John Madden, Harvey Milk, Fritz Scholder, Danielle Steel, Joe Weider and General Chuck Yeager.

About Kaiser Permanente Ventures:

Kaiser Permanente Ventures, the corporate venture capital arm of Kaiser Permanente, makes investments in medical devices, healthcare services and information technology companies. Kaiser Permanente Ventures is dedicated to partnering with entrepreneurial companies to build innovative and enduring businesses that advance the quality and affordability of health care. Since its inception in 1997, Kaiser Permanente Ventures has invested in more than 25 venture-capital backed companies at all stages of development, and contributed organizational expertise, time and resources to the success of these companies. For additional information please visit www.kpventures.com.