

Fred VanNatta's Biography

Fred VanNatta is the founding father of VanNatta Public Relations, (VPR) originally known as "Public Affairs, Inc." VanNatta's continuous leadership and guiding vision has been a stable force in this dynamic company for almost four decades.

VanNatta grew up in the back woods of Columbia County on a cattle and hog ranch, now converted into a small woodlands timber operation. He is a graduate of Willamette University with a degree in Political Science. He earned his Master's Degree from the University of Oregon in Political Science. VanNatta's daughter Mary Louise joined the company in 1986. "One of the great rewards in my life has been having my daughter Mary Louise join the firm. She has expanded the scope of talents, expertise and service that we provide to clients," VanNatta said.

Mary Louise was a rewarding and welcome addition, as well as the catalyst that initiated the company's expansion. In the beginning however, VanNatta primarily focused on public relations and political strategies for candidates and issues. During his first year in business, VanNatta kept busy as the 1968 *Reagan for President* campaign's Western Regional Director. In his second year, he served as Chief of Staff for the 1968 Republican Governor's Conference in Palm Springs, where California Governor Ronald Reagan served as Conference Chair.

Back in Salem, VanNatta soon realized that his services needed to be extended to associations and other clients requiring year-round guidance and support. His first client was the Association of Engineering Employees (AEE). VanNatta's relationship with AEE began in January 1969 and still exists today. Three days later after obtaining AEE as his first client, VanNatta acquired his second client – the Oregon Home Builders Association (OHBA). VanNatta worked for the OHBA from 1969 through 2003, serving as both the Executive Vice President and chief lobbyist during most of his tenure. In the latter years, he lobbied and transferred administrative duties to others. Under VanNatta's management, OHBA won awards for its outstanding membership drives, member involvement, and innovative and successful Political Action Committee (PAC). During his time with the Home Builders, VanNatta recruited and helped elect two past state presidents to the legislature and assisted many other members to achieve public office election at both the state and local level.

In addition to AEE and OHBA, VanNatta has worked on varied and diverse projects, campaigns and accounts, with an extensive range of associations, organizations, businesses and individuals. "Over the years, we've had a broad mix of stable and continuing relationships, as well as short-term assignments and high-profile clients," VanNatta said. Clients reaching beyond Oregon-based firms and associations have included the National Basketball Association, National Football League, and Alamo Rent-A-Car. VanNatta has also been deeply involved in several landmark pieces of legislation, including Senate Bill 100. SB 100 was the enforcement mechanism behind SB 10, which required every Oregon city and county to have a comprehensive land-use plan that met state standards. SB 100 was signed by Governor McCall on May 29, 1973,

and created the Department of Land Conservation and Development and the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). VanNatta is referenced in Brent Walth's definitive work *Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* for his participation with a closed-door committee that wrote the final compromise draft of SB 100.

VanNatta also has a long history of community involvement; he was a charter member of the Salem City Club. He was a founding member and past president of the Salem Economic Development Corporation, now known as the Strategic Economic Development Corporation (SEDCOR), and his business has been a member of the Salem Chamber of Commerce for over 35 years. He is a past director of the Chamber and has chaired its Governmental Affairs Committee three separate times. He is an original member of the Oregon State Capitol Foundation, which strives to identify and preserve the political history of Oregon's Capitol. He was identified as a "Salem Business Pioneer" by West Coast Bank and was inducted into the Oregon Housing Hall of Fame in 1999.

Over time, as the next generation assumed more responsibility for the operation of the business, VanNatta turned more attention to his interest in fishing. Staying true to his political roots, VanNatta co-founded Oregon Anglers, the first Political Action Committee in Oregon dedicated to sport fishing. He is cofounder of the Oregon Anglers Research Society (OARS), a research and education entity. A believer in working together with like-minded colleagues, VanNatta is a member of the North American Fishing Club, Oregon Fishing Club, Oregon Steelheaders, Mid-Valley Anglers, Santiam FlyCasters, Tillamook Anglers, Lower Columbia Walleye Club and Nustucca Anglers. In addition to his status as an enthusiastic fisherman, VanNatta has been a dedicated beekeeper for 56 years. In 2003, VanNatta won the Oregon State Fair's Sweepstakes Award for the best exhibit by a Hobbyist Beekeeper. He is a 40-year member of the American Beekeeping Association and a current long-term member in both the Oregon State and Willamette Valley Beekeeping Associations.

VanNatta aims to remain close to his roots in all areas of life. It is VanNatta's hope that the Columbia County property where he grew up will endure forever and VanNatta and his brothers established guiding principles for the property in order to insure its sustainability. The property is now shared by eight family members spanning two generations. Some of these members reside on the property and they manage it on a sustained yield basis. VanNatta also cites the need for future generations to remain politically involved enough to prevent government from destroying ownership and management of family-owned natural resources.

Finally, VanNatta believes that the recent acquisition of the South Commercial Professional Building is a significant asset to the company employees and clients, as well as an excellent permanent home for VanNatta Public Relations. In conclusion, VanNatta observes that VPR was founded in 1967, the same year as Intel. He recognizes that although VanNatta Public Relations has not grown at the same rate as Intel (99,900 employees and \$39 billion dollars in annual income), it is nevertheless a thriving business, driven by family dedication and employee pride in a job well done.