

Permanent Tribute to James R. and Mary Lou Ellis Dedicated at the Convention Center

SEATTLE: For over 50 years, James R. Ellis has been an inspiration and driving force behind an astounding array of civic achievements and has left a bigger imprint on our state, region and city than almost any other single individual.

Ellis was a leader in the campaigns to clean up Lake Washington in the 1950s; finance mass transit, parks, pools and other public facilities through “Forward Thrust” bonds in the 1960s; preserve farmlands in the 1970s; build and later expand the Washington State Convention & Trade Center in the 1980s; and establish the Mountains to Sound Greenway in the 1990s — among other projects. “When you think of the legacy of the Northwest,” says former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, “and all we have – a cleaned-up Lake Washington, the green open space, even the viability of downtown Seattle – Jim Ellis’ name is at the top of the list.”

Jim Ellis has often said that the inspiration for his lifetime of public service was the death of his brother Robert in combat during World War II. His wife, Mary Lou, persuaded him to channel his grief by doing “something extra” to make up for what his brother might have done, had he lived.

To commemorate these outstanding achievements, the board of directors of the Washington State Convention & Trade Center dedicated the plaza adjoining Freeway Park in tribute to Jim and Mary Lou Ellis. An impressive work made of native Washington basalt was also created in their honor by renowned designer Angela Danadjieva. The official dedication of the Ellis Plaza and commemorative artwork took place on Wednesday, June 13, with Washington Governor Christine Gregoire, former Governor John Spellman, Chairman Frank K. Finneran and President John Christison from the Convention Center, Karen Glover of K&L Gates, Jim Ellis and members of his family.

The Plaza is accessible from the Convention Center or Freeway Park and is open to the public during daylight hours. Informative panels highlighting the history Ellis’ many civic achievements are on display in the atrium on Level 4 South of the Convention Center Galleria, daily from 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.