

# Hal Levin



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October 6, 1941 – February 21, 2023 Santa Cruz, CA Hal Levin, a long-time resident of Santa Cruz, and a pioneer and leader in the field of indoor air quality and building ecology, died in Laveno, Italy, on February 21, 2023.

Locally, Hal was known and respected by many who appreciated his civic-mindedness and tireless advocacy for sustainable land use in order to protect our natural environment.

He was a mentor to the owner-builder community and a champion of civil liberties.

Hal was born in Portland, OR, on October 6, 1941, the son of Mollie Schnitzer Levin and Bernard Levin. After his father returned from World War II, the family moved to Beverly Hills, California. Hal's lifelong love of

baseball began there, as he played from Little League through high school. He attended Cornell University before transferring to the University of California at Berkeley, pitching on both baseball teams. Hal continued to play throughout his life and pitched in the Men's Senior Baseball League until he was seventy-seven years old.

Hal was a volunteer architect in the Peace Corps in Colombia from 1966-1968. After returning from the Peace Corps, he graduated from Cal with degrees in architecture and English. For the next several years, Hal worked at the Organization for Social and Technological Innovation and Building Systems Development, focusing on affordable and sustainable housing. Hal moved to Boulder Creek, California in 1973 and built several houses. He also was a Research Specialist at the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley where he taught budding architects about the need to understand the realities of constructing the things that they designed. In 1972, Hal founded the Building Ecology Research Group. In 1977, then Governor Jerry Brown, appointed him as a public member of the California State Board of Architectural Examiners, a position he held until 1985; Hal was President of the Board in 1983 and 1984. As a member of the Board, he held hearings on "sick building syndrome." These hearings ignited his interest in indoor air quality and the ecology of buildings.

Hal was early to recognize the need for, and value of, examining the toxicity of building materials and building systems used in their construction and operation. His work focused on the integration of knowledge about indoor and outdoor air pollution as well as other risk factors in the design, construction, and operation of residential and commercial buildings and communities.

Hal was the President of the Indoor Air Institute and a Principal in Building Ecology Research Group. He was a prolific author on the subject of indoor air quality. Hal was engaged by many institutions as a research scientist, architect, and consultant throughout the world. These included Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, UC Davis, the University of California, the State of California, the National Institutes of Health, the World Health Organization, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Hal lectured extensively all over the world and taught at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, and Harvard University.

Hal was a member of many organizations, including the American Society

for Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers -ASHRAE (which awarded him its distinguished service award), the American Society for Testing and Materials -ASTM (which gave him its Award of Merit), and the International Society of Indoor Air Sciences.

Hal was the President of Indoor Air 2002, organizing the Ninth International Conference on Indoor Air Quality and Climate, held in Monterey, California, in 2002 (in 2018, at the Fifteenth International Conference, Hal had been given the Lifetime Service Award for his exceptional contributions to indoor air sciences).

Hal's influence in the air quality field was profound. He recognized the gaps in his own knowledge of an evolving science, the result of which was to press himself and others to stretch their efforts to make buildings increasingly healthy and sustainable.

Among Hal's strengths was his ability to help his students and colleagues find both voice and encouragement where it had been absent. As one colleague said, "He made me a better person." Similar reflections such as "a better researcher," "a better professional," and "a better carpenter" are a few of the expressions from his many friends and associates.

Having developed an interest in South American music while in the Peace Corps, Hal hosted a Sunday morning show on Santa Cruz public radio station KUSP for eighteen years. Hal was a vegetarian for fifty years and enjoyed organic gardening. He was passionate about Labrador retrievers and had many devoted canine companions over the years.

In 2003, Hal met the love of his life, Mariachiara Tallacchini - a law professor and ethicist - in Milan, Italy. They were wed in 2004 and shared a bi-continental marriage for the next nineteen years. In 2019, Hal concluded that it was time to retire and, with their dog, Aki, moved to Reno di Leggiuno, Italy, by Lake Maggiore, so that he could be with Mariachiara full time. Sadly, Hal was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in April 2020 and his health rapidly declined.

In addition to his wife, Hal is survived by his sisters, Ellen Jacobs (Martin) and Nancy Levin (Daniel Caraco); his nephews Joel Jacobs (Denise Wolf) and Joshua Caraco; his niece Margie Jacobs (Andrew Seplow); great-nieces and cousins; and Aki. Hal's parents and his nephew, Benjamin Caraco,

predeceased him.

The family requests that donations in Hal's memory be made to the Ben Caraco/Scott Stapleton Scholarship Fund at The College Preparatory School in Oakland, California, The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, or the Natural Resources Defense Council.