

Josef Staufer to be Recognized with 2020 Vail Trailblazer Award for Nearly 60 Years of Civic Involvement, Inspiration and Advocacy

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Josef Staufer, known for his impassioned speeches that have inspired bold and visionary actions by Vail's leadership for nearly 60 years, has been selected as the recipient of the 2020 Vail Trailblazer Award. Presented by the Vail Town Council, the annual Vail Trailblazer Award honors those who contribute their time and talent to make Vail a great resort community.

Staufer and his family, including wife Anne, son Jonathan, daughter-in-law Wendi and granddaughter Freyja, will be formally recognized at the March 3 evening Vail Town Council meeting in which a mayor's proclamation honoring his significant contributions will be read into the public record. Recognition will also take place during the Town of Vail Annual Community Meeting on March 10 at Donovan Pavilion.

Staufer was among a handful of hospitality-trained Austrians who were drawn to Vail during its early days and is perhaps best known for helping to shape Vail's identity by cautioning that bigger is not always better. On numerous occasions, Staufer has been eager to share his cautionary observations about overdevelopment and has implored Vail to resist unbridled growth. "The only people that can ruin Vail is us," he once observed.

Trailblazer nominators provided examples of Staufer's hard work, integrity and a steadfast persistence over the decades in working to make Vail better for everyone – in ways both big and small. His European roots, they say, have been the basis for Staufer's appreciation for beautiful architecture and furnishings, excellent cuisine and warm hospitality.

During Vail's initial years, Staufer embraced the vision to model Vail after an alpine mountain town saying, "if this place doesn't make it, nothing will." He served in hotel and restaurant management positions at Mid-Vail, Lodge at Vail and Manor Vail before eventually partnering with an investor to purchase the Vail Village Inn in 1969.

In his quest to help the resort succeed, Staufer was instrumental in founding Vail's original resort association and served as president for a time. He is also credited with convincing his bosses to extend the Lodge at Vail's season during those early years in recognition of Vail's potential as a summer destination.

Staufer's civic leadership was realized in 1972 when he was elected to the Vail Town Council. As Vail was turning the corner on its first decade that year, a profile in the Vail Trail newspaper identified Staufer as "A Fighter for Tomorrow." And fighter he has been. Staufer helped lead an unpopular effort to acquire the land that would eventually become Ford Park, saving it from

certain development. In another instance, he was instrumental in insisting that a new parking structure planned for the Village needed to be buried and landscaped. This required convincing fellow townspeople to vote to issue bonds to pay for it.

Looking to the future, Staufer was among those who helped persuade the Eagle County School District to build an elementary school in Vail by offering up town property for the eventual construction of Red Sandstone Elementary which opened in 1977. He continued his service on the Town Council through 1977, the last two years as mayor pro tem.

Staufer's leadership also included a stint on the Vail Water and Sanitation District board where he helped organize "Walk for Water," an effort that raised money and awareness to defeat attempts to divert water from areas such as Piney Lake and the proposed Homestake II Reservoir.

Staufer's presence as a business owner continued for more than 30 years with operation of his Vail Village Inn hotel and restaurant until its sale in 1998, while wife Anne had her own success in operating a gift shop, including the present-day Annie's. Son Jonathan was born and raised in Vail and, like his father, has become an advocate for environmental stewardship. Jonathan is the owner of Grappa Fine Wines and Spirits, located in Vail Village.

Now in retirement, the elder Staufer's enjoy splitting their time between Vail and their home in St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. Even today at age 85, Josef never tires of sharing his love for Vail by weighing in on issues that matter most to him. His letters to the editor and his passionate commentary at town meetings serve as a reminder of his unwavering conviction that have helped shape Vail as we know it today.

"It is a great honor to be recognized by my peers – the people who worked so hard to make this place – for my contributions to our amazing home, Vail, Colorado," said Staufer.

The Vail Trailblazer Award was established during the town's 50th birthday celebration in 2016. Staufer is the fifth recipient to be honored and was selected by a Town Council committee from among other deserving nominations.

For more information about the Vail Trailblazer Award and the nomination process, visit the town's website at vailgov.com/trailblazeraward.