

Maxwell Starkman, 82, Renowned Architect

By Myrna Oliver
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Los Angeles — Maxwell Starkman, a Los Angeles-based architect who began designing tract homes for the post-World War II Southern California housing boom and capped his career with the Museum of Tolerance and Sony Pictures Plaza, has died. He was 82.

Starkman died Monday in Los Angeles of natural causes.

Establishing his firm in the 1950s, Starkman espoused "architecture for investment," combining design, materials and construction methods to complete projects quickly and return speedy profits to investors. The focus gave Maxwell Starkman Associates a sound reputation and financial footing in an era before developers became sophisticated about pairing what looked good, was functional and could be built and sold quickly.

"In those days," he told the Los Angeles Times in 1983, "a developer was anyone who wanted to build a building for investment purposes, anyone who had the foresight to recognize this emerging profession. They were pioneers in a new field, learning by trial and error. . . .

Today, the developers are very professional, very sophisticated and highly educated as a whole. But . . . we can still add an ingredient that even the most sophisticated may overlook."

By 1983, celebrating its 30th anniversary, Starkman's firm was ranked 98th

among Engineering News Record magazine's top 400 firms in the United States and was the country's fourth largest purely architectural practice in Building Design and Construction magazine's 1982 survey.

Starkman retired in 1987, shortly after designing the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The architect's four-story design included the 36,000-square-foot Holocaust museum, an auditorium, seminar rooms, a research library and archive and film and video studio.

Another of his major projects was the \$60 million Filmland Corporate Center (now called Sony Pictures Plaza) entertainment complex in Culver City, Calif.

Born in Toronto, Starkman went into the Royal Canadian Engineers straight out of high school and spent World War II serving in England, France, Belgium and Germany. He went on to earn his architecture degree at the University of Manitoba, earning the school's Gold Medal in Architecture.

Starkman moved to Los Angeles in 1950, and worked for Richard J. Neutra, often called the grandfather of contemporary architecture in California.

In 1953, Starkman joined architect Fritz Reichl to form Reichl and Starkman Architects. After Reichl's death a few years later, the firm became Maxwell Starkman and Associates.

His wartime experience prepared him



Architect Maxwell Starkman in 1983

for private practice, Starkman once told the Times, explaining: "When someone would say, 'It can't be done,' that was a challenge — and we succeeded."

Starkman built more than 20,000 single-family homes and thousands of apartment projects, then pioneered early shopping centers, and went on to office buildings, luxury condominiums, hotels and mixed-use projects.

Widowed in 1992 by the death of his wife of 46 years, Gloria, Starkman is survived by three sons, David, Laurence and Robert, and a daughter, Nancy, and six grandchildren.

The Los Angeles Times is a Tribune Co. newspaper.