Howard Campen served as County Executive for Santa Clara County from 1957 until 1976, overseeing a period of tremendous change and development in the county. Born in San Jose in 1914, Campen graduated from Stanford University in 1937 and received his law degree from Stanford University School of Law in 1940. After service in the Navy during World War II, Campen began work for the county in the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office in 1946. In 1948, he was appointed to the newly created position of County Counsel, in which he remained until 1955, when he resigned to enter private law practice. In 1957, the county selected him as County Executive, a position he retained until his retirement in 1976. During his tenure, the county underwent significant development, with county government undertaking major capital investments, especially in the county freeway system. Campen withdrew from county affairs after his retirement. He died in 2005.

Left: Howard Campen being sworn in as County Executive, 1957.
Left: Front and back of Campen’s employee ID card.

Above: Campen’s business card.
Front and back of a guide for the Civic Center, 1961.
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 7, 1976

Mr. Howard Campen
15780 E. Alta Vista Way
San Jose, California 95127

Dear Mr. Campen:

Please accept my congratulations and best wishes on
being chosen to receive the annual National Conference
of Christians and Jews Brotherhood Award. This honor is
a most meaningful one, and well deserved, on your behalf.
I am sure you and all those involved are looking forward
to a most pleasant evening at the annual dinner. And,
again, my congratulations on being chosen to receive
the Brotherhood Award.

With kindest regards.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Member of Congress

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Hewlett-Packard Company
800 Page Mill Road
Palo Alto, California 94304

January 23, 1976

Mr. Howard W. Campen
County Executive
County Government Center
11th Floor
70 W. Hedding
San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Howard:

I am very sorry to learn that you plan
to step out of your job here in Santa Clara County
because it will be very difficult to find any one who
can come even close to filling your shoes. I know I
speak for a great many people in Santa Clara County in
expressing to you my appreciation for a most outstanding
job and a great contribution to our Government.

You have my best wishes in whatever you
plan to do from here on, and if I can be helpful in
any way I hope you will let me know.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David Packard

DP/mmp

Letters to Campen from Congressman Don Edwards
and Hewlett-Packard co-founder David Packard.
February 10, 1969

Mr. Howard W. Campen, County Executive
County of Santa Clara
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California

Dear Mr. Campen:

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I
hereby appoint you a member of the Intergovernmental Board on Electronic Data Processing.

In accepting this appointment, you will be making a worthwhile contribution to the
Board and to the State of California.

I am enclosing your commission and an oath of office form. With it goes my best wishes
and my sincerest thanks to you for accepting this responsibility.

Cordially,

[Signature]

RONALD REAGAN
Governor

May 25, 1965

The Honorable Howard W. Campen
Santa Clara County Executive
County Administration Building
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California

Dear Howard:

I have just been informed that the Senate has confirmed your qualifications for appointment
as Member of Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. Please note date of
your term expiration on enclosed memo.

It is a pleasure for me to send you the enclosed commission, together with an oath of
office and a memorandum of what is necessary in order for you to qualify under this
commission.

My very best wishes to you.

Sincerely

[Signature]

EDMUND G. BROWN, Governor

Letters to Campen from governors Ronald Reagan and Pat Brown.
Campen Named County Counsel; Administrator Duty Dropped

Deputy Dist. Atty. Howard W. Campen was appointed County Counsel—the first Santa Clara County has ever had—by the Board of Supervisors yesterday at $7200 a year salary. Appointment becomes effective Jan. 1. At the same time, the Board eliminated a provision of the County ordinance requiring the County Counsel to serve as attorney for the Public Administrator in handling all legal affairs of that office, including estates.

Originally it was urged fees reverting to the County treasury from the estate business would pay cost of the new office, but members of the County Bar Assn. complained the practice would mean taking fees away from Santa Clara County lawyers now assigned the work by the Public Administrator.

Campen, himself, told the Board the revenue would be, in his opinion, too slight to warrant cost of extra help he would require.

Other business transacted by the Board yesterday included: Calling for bids Jan. 12 for sale of $35,000 worth of Los Altos County Fire Protection Dist. bonds for a fire house and equipment.

Ordering another meeting with County Fair Commission
County Executive Quits Under Fire

County Executive Johann D. Anderson resigned yesterday after a year at the helm of Santa Clara county's government. Anderson, 1st county executive named under the 1950 Charter, gave ill health as his reason for resigning.

But reliable and informed persons at the courthouse said the resignation had been dictated by members of the board of supervisors, the same four that hired Anderson six months ago.

County Counsel Howard W. Campen was recommended for the position of county executive by Anderson. Supervisors accepted the recommendation. The board accepted Anderson's resignation perfunctorily and expressed no surprise when it was read.

Campen even inquired whether another letter concerning the promotion appointment might not be the same envelope Anderson handed to Clerk of the Board Richard Olson before the morning supervisors' session.

There was a pause of both follow:

"Gentlemen: It is desired because of a physical condition caused largely by the stress of work attached to my present position to request sick leave, effective March 17 to April 15. "At the conclusion of this sick leave, I offer my resignation, effective April 16, 1953."

"It is with a great deal of regret that I find this necessary as it has been a pleasant task working among the fine people associated with Santa Clara County."

Concerning Campen's appointment, Anderson wrote:

"In the event of your granting my request and acceptance of my resignation effective April 10, 1953, it is requested that you appoint Howard Campen, county counsel, as county executive pro tem. This would be for the period March 17, 1952, to April 10, 1953."

Motion to accept Anderson's resignation was proposed by Supervisor Earl C. Campbell and seconded by Supervisor Arthur W. Brown. It carried unanimously and without comment.

All Board members refused to comment on the resignation, for the record, or to admit, for the record, a secret meeting had been held last Thursday night at which pressure was brought on Anderson to resign.

Supervisor Joseph M. McKinnon said last Friday, however, such a meeting had been held and that he had not been invited. McKinnon voted against hiring Anderson last year.

Present at the Thursday meeting were Campbell, Brown, Su.

Appointment Official On Monday; Assumes New Duties March 1

By DALE LANE

Howard W. Campen, 42-year-old San Jose attorney, will be the next county executive.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Sam P. Della Maggiore this morning announced that appointment of the former county counsel will be made official Monday. He will take office March 1.

Campen will succeed Frank H. Thill, who resigned last week under pressure. Thill's resignation is effective Feb. 28, but he goes on terminal leave Friday.

The caretaker operation, bridging the administrations of Thill and Campen, will be presided over by County Assessor Hayden W. Pitman, who was named acting executive Monday.

Decision to appoint Campen was made by the Board at an executive session late Wednesday, but Della Maggiore held the announcement for an 8 a.m. press conference at his San Jose High School office.

The choice was unanimous, the chairman said.

The Board discussed other possible choices but interviewed only Campen, Della Maggiore said.

Campen will start at the same salary Thill drew, $26,400 a year, according to Della Maggiore.

The appointment is a permanent one, said Della Maggiore to dampen rumors that the attorney would hold the job for

Cloud Seeders In Action

Although the weatherman failed to find a sure-fire storm heading for Santa Clara Valley, officials of Universal Air Service, the county's cloud-seeding enterprise, were at work.

Cloud seeders, according to the weatherman, are not at the mercy of the weather. The weatherman is left to his crystal ball.
Left: Campen in his office, circa 1976.

Above: Campen at his retirement party, March 21, 1976.