

Edward Hines, longtime chairman and CEO of family lumber company, dies at 79

By **Bob Goldsborough**
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Edward Hines spent more than 50 years working for the family lumber business that his grandfather founded in 1892.

As president and CEO of Edward Hines Lumber Co. for more than 25 years, Mr. Hines navigated the firm through building booms and busts and — in a risky move that he characterized at the time as making him "an entrepreneur" — taking the company private in 1985.

"He just loved the business," said retired Tribune Co. Chairman and CEO John W. Madigan, a longtime friend who also served for a time on the board of Edward Hines Lumber. "He was close to all his contractor customers. He was born into it, and he carried on the traditions of his father and grandfather."

A Northfield resident since 1967, Mr. Hines, 79, died Thursday, Feb. 5, at Evanston Hospital following neurosurgery, said his son, Mac Hines.

Born in Chicago and raised in Winnetka's Hubbard Woods area, Mr. Hines attended North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka for grade school and high school. He earned a bachelor's degree in 1957 from Williams College in Williamstown, Mass.

Upon graduating college, Mr. Hines immediately joined his family business.

"My father and grandfather thought it would be best if he started out at the ground floor, so he began working in a warehouse in Skokie," Mr. Hines' son said.

From there, Mr. Hines moved around, working in every aspect of the business, including managing the company's largest Chicago lumberyard.

In 1979, Mr. Hines' father, Charles, retired from the company, and Mr. Hines took over. The housing market slump of the early 1980s hit the firm hard, and with the company's stock price sagging, one prominent shareholder soon began agitating for a sale.

In 1985, Mr. Hines proposed a buyout that effectively split up the company. He acquired the firm's Chicago-area retail outlets and a plant in St. Charles. Other assets, such as a distribution network and a lumberyard on the South Side, were sold off.

"My father felt strongly that there were hundreds and hundreds of jobs at stake and that this move would save jobs," Mac Hines said.

The company then moved its headquarters from downtown Chicago to Itasca, later relocating to Buffalo Grove.

"I look forward to being an entrepreneur," Mr. Hines told the Tribune in 1985.

Under Mr. Hines' leadership, the company expanded its retail operations to three states.

Mr. Hines retired as president and CEO in late 2007, handing the reins to longtime lieutenant Gerald Wille. Mr. Hines remained as chairman until 2013. The company struggled in the most recent housing crisis and was sold to a private-equity firm in 2010.

Mr. Hines served for one term on the board of Northfield's Sunset Ridge School District 29, from 1979 until 1983. The board hired Howard Bultinck as an assistant superintendent in 1980, and as he exited the board in 1983, Mr. Hines urged his fellow board members to promote Bultinck to superintendent, which they did.

"Ed was a gentleman at all times who truly, honestly and sincerely cared about family, community, country and God," said Bultinck, now a professor at Northeastern Illinois University. "He was kind, caring and charismatic, and he wanted to give children the absolute best education possible."

McDonald's Corp. Chairman Andy McKenna, a longtime friend and neighbor, recalled Mr. Hines as "just a remarkable guy."

"No one had a better spirit and optimism about things than Eddy," McKenna said. "He wasn't complicated. There are some people in life who are complicated, and Eddy was very straightforward."

Globe Corp. Chairman Bert Getz, a friend since grammar school, remembered Mr. Hines as "the type of person that everybody enjoys being with, with always a smile on his face."

"He loved people as they all loved him," Getz said. "People couldn't wait to get together with him, whether it be for golf or bridge or anything that he did."

West suburban Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital is named for Mr. Hines' uncle, who was killed in action in France during World War I. The land for the hospital was donated by the family.

Mr. Hines also is survived by his wife of more than 50 years, Marcia; two daughters, Elizabeth Bigelow and Heather Clessuras; and 10 grandchildren.

A memorial service will be Wednesday at Kenilworth Union Church, 211 Kenilworth Ave., in Kenilworth.

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