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Biography Duane D. Pearsall, PhD

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BIOGRAPHY

Duane D. Pearsall, PhD

Raised in southern Michigan, Duane Pearsall was completing his second year at General Motors Institute when World War II interrupted his education. Enlisting for flight training, he was 'volunteered' to divert to special navigation training, thence to the fleet for one year as navigator - co-pilot with his squadron of twin engine PV-1, Venturas. Most of this duty was anti-sub patrol, covering much of the North Atlantic from Reykjavik, Iceland. After one year with the fleet he was called back and completed his flight training as a Lt.jg., followed by several years in the active Naval Reserve.

Earning a BSBA, with a major in Engineering, from the University of Denver, he joined Honeywell Corporation, becoming regional construction manager and leaving in 1955 to found Pearsall Company, a manufacturers' representative for commercial heating and air handling equipment. He founded Statitrol Corporation in 1963 to make static control devices for photographic dark rooms.

His accidental discovery that ions are rapidly absorbed by particles of combustion led to the development of the first commercial smoke detector made in the United States, followed three years later by the introduction of the first battery-powered home smoke detector in 1970. His company rapidly grew to 1,000 employees by late 1976 and was merged with Emerson Electric Co. in 1977.

A venture capital loan of \$250,000 in 1965 was critical to his survival. Most important was the advice and counsel of the venture capitalist who served on his board for 12 years.

Mr. Pearsall invested in Enervest, Inc., an early venture capital fund in 1979 and later became a founding General Partner of the Columbine Venture Funds, managing \$78 million, retiring in 1993.

His many awards include: National Small Business Person of the Year, 1976 from the Small Business Administration and presented by President Ford. This award led to appointments to many committees and some thirty trips to Washington over the next seven years, testifying before several congressional committees on behalf of small business

He is a former director of the Lakewood and Denver Chambers of Commerce and past Chairman of the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry. He is a past member of the Colorado Health Policy Council, the Colorado Commission on Fire Safety, co-chairman of the Colorado Commission on Productivity and past chairman of Osage Initiatives, a U.S. West sponsored program for employing the homeless.

In May, 1996, he was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science by Worcester Polytechnic Institute which has become the leading institution of higher education in the area of Fire Safety Engineering in the United States. Having introduced the first U/L and

FM approved 'Early-Warning' battery powered Home Smoke Detector it is gratifying to see the headlined article in USA TODAY of August 3, 2000 '**Child Fire Deaths Cut In Half**'. National Fire Protection Association figures show that fire deaths in the USA have fallen almost steadily each year since 1977 when counting began, from a peak of 7710 deaths in 1978 to 3570 deaths in 1999. Mr John Hall, NFPA, says the overall decline in fire deaths is connected to several developments, but it is due primarily to the wider use of smoke detectors. "The pattern is that there has been a decrease in all sizes of communities. The obvious explanation is smoke alarms," he said. "They have gone from a rarity to commonplace."

Of his many awards, the one most cherished is 'Fire Protection Man of the Year, 1980' presented by The Society of Fire Protection Engineers in recognition of the introduction of the home smoke detector ten years earlier (1970). The Presenter suggested that the home smoke detector represented the most significant advancement in fire safety in over 80 years.

Among many awards are the following:

Fire Protection Man of the Year; National Society of Fire Protection Engineers.
Denver's Ten Most Distinguished; Denver Magazine.
Entrepreneur of the Year, Supporter, Inc Magazine, Merrill Lynch, etc.
Franklin-Jefferson Award; Small Business High Technology Inst.
Honorary Doctor of Science; Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

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